

SEVENTY MILES AN HOUR.

BY JAMES D. M'CABE, JR.

M. EUGENE LAROMIE was not a little startled one bright clear morning, to receive an order commanding him to repair immediately to the Bureau of the Chief of the Secret Police of Paris. I say he was startled, not because such an occurrence was unusual, but because M. Laromie had been, for several days, indulging in what we Americans call a "spree," and his guilty conscience suggested to him that his chief was about to bring him to account for it. Nevertheless, such a summons is something that a French official cannot disregard, and without delay he hastened to attend the bureau, and was at once admitted to the presence of the chief.

"Good-morning, Laromie," said the chief, pleasantly. "You look downcast. No wonder. For three days you have had too much wine in you. Ah, my friend, you see I am quite a good detective! I can tell you how you have spent every moment of those three days."

"Monsieur," said Laromie, bluntly, "one must relax his self-restraint sometimes."

"True, my friend. I have no idea of censuring you. I only wish to warn you to be more careful in the future, as those above me may not think so lightly of your indiscretions as I do. Enough of this, however. I wish to know if your head is clear enough to undertake a most difficult case?"

"I think so," replied Laromie, laughing. "I would not have returned to duty, if it had not been."

"Well, then, my friend, there has been a startling discovery in the last few hours. You know Monsieur Vilele, the banker?"

"Yes."

"What is your opinion of him?"

"I know nothing of him by my own experience," answered Laromie. "He has the reputation of being one of the most upright and reliable bankers in Paris."

"Exactly," said the chief, coolly; "and if he had not fallen into trouble, would, no doubt, have died an honest man. But know, monsieur, that this excellent banker has been terribly imprudent of late. He has speculated heavily in the stocks, and has lost. Two days ago, he received two mil-

lions of francs belonging to the government, but instead of applying them to the purpose indicated in his instructions, he has disappeared, and the government is unable to discover either the man, or any trace of its money."

"You astonish me!" exclaimed Laromie.

"Monsieur Laromie," said the chief, shrugging his shoulders, "I thought you a man of too much experience to be astonished at anything. However, let me resume my story. Monsieur Vilele has disappeared. We have reason to believe that he is still in Paris. The government is extremely anxious to discover him and bring him to justice. I have suggested you as the best person to conduct the search for him, and have received orders to place you upon it at once. Here is a paper, signed by the Minister of the Interior, commanding all persons to assist you, in whatever way you may desire. You will have a difficult task, I think; but it will bring you a plenty of honor, if you succeed. Do you object to undertaking it?"

"Not at all. It is my duty to obey all orders of this kind; and besides, the more difficult a case is, the better I like it."

"Very good, then, monsieur. I will so inform the minister. You will do well to lose no time, as Monsieur Vilele has already the start of you."

Laromie left the bureau, and, as was his custom when placed in charge of a difficult undertaking, strolled towards the garden of the Tuilleries, to collect his thoughts and ponder over his plan of operations. There was something about the place, and in the fresh and cheering shrubbery with which it was surrounded, that seemed to inspire him. It was lucky for him that he went there on this occasion, as the sequel will show.

He was sitting on a bench in one of the main avenues, with his head resting on his hands, buried in profound thought. The rustling of a dress aroused him, and looking up half absently, he saw a lady pass by, leisurely. She did not seem to notice him, but walked on, carelessly. He sat for some time, watching her, until she had almost disappeared in the distance, and then, for the first time, noticed a small piece of paper

lying on the ground just in front of him. Merely from curiosity, he picked it up and opened it. It was simply a note, and ran as follows:

"DEAR MARIE,—At nine to-morrow night.—V."

He was quite sure that the lady had dropped the paper, and now he remembered that as she passed him she had drawn her handkerchief from her pocket. In this way, no doubt, she had thrown out the paper. Laromie rose from his seat and hurried in the direction the lady had taken, intending to return the note to her; but she had passed out of sight, and after a fruitless walk of a few minutes, he turned back towards the place he had left. As he did so, he glanced at the note again, and this time the signature attracted his attention.

"V," he exclaimed, suddenly pausing in his walk. "That's the first letter in the name of the man I am looking for. What if the note should have been written by M. Vilele? It's a fortunate thing that I thought of it, as I can settle the matter in a few minutes."

He left the gardens, and proceeded to the house which M. Vilele had occupied for his bank. The head bookkeeper and one or two of the clerks were still there, trying to arrange the accounts of the house in an intelligible form, before surrendering them to the government, which had demanded them, in virtue of its being the principal sufferer. Laromie informed the bookkeeper that he was authorized by the Minister of the Interior to ask for a specimen of M. Vilele's handwriting.

"Anything," he added; "an old letter, or anything that will give me a correct idea of the writing."

The bookkeeper handed him a letter which the banker had left unfinished on his desk, on the day of his disappearance. Placing it by the side of the note he had found, the detective compared the two, closely. There could be no mistake; the same person had written both notes. Turning to the bookkeeper and handing him the note he had found, he asked if he recognized the writing. The man glanced at it, and then flushed darkly.

"It is Monsieur Vilele's writing," he said.

"Do you know the person to whom it is addressed?" asked Laromie.

"To my cost, monsieur. She is a very

beautiful woman, and but for her this house would have been in a prosperous condition, and I should not have been thrown out of employment. She turned Monsieur Vilele's head from the first; and now you see the result."

"Do you think Monsieur Vilele and she are in communication with each other?"

"It is likely. This note would seem to indicate it."

"Can you tell me where this lady lives?"

"Not at present. If monsieur will call at eight o'clock to-night, I shall be able to inform him."

"Very well. I will be here precisely at eight."

Laromie was very well satisfied with his morning's work. The note he had found had given him a clue to the mystery, and by following it closely, he might be able to accomplish his task. At eight o'clock he returned to the bank, and found the bookkeeper waiting for him. The latter had succeeded in learning the residence of the woman, and gave Laromie explicit directions how to find it. Without delay, the detective set off for the place. It was in a distant part of the city, and it was after nine o'clock before he reached it. He rang the bell, and the porter appeared. In a sleepy voice he asked Laromie what he wanted.

"Does Madame R—— live here?" asked the official.

"She did live here until this afternoon, monsieur," was the reply. "But she has gone to England, and will not return again."

"I must search the house," said Laromie, sternly. "I am an officer of the law."

"Monsieur is at liberty to do so," said the porter; "but he will find that I speak the truth. Madame left for Calais this afternoon."

It was evident that the man spoke the truth, and Laromie felt that it would be losing time to search the house. With an oath he turned from the door, and hailed a fiacre which chanced to be passing. Springing in, he ordered the man to drive with speed to the railway station. As the vehicle rattled over the paved streets, he settled himself back in his seat, and commenced to think over what had happened. Madame R—— had doubtless escaped him, unless he could telegraph to Calais to have her detained. That seemed hardly probable, as the train left early in the afternoon, and she

was now, beyond a doubt, almost safe in England. Still, the effort must be made. Then he thought of the note.

"At nine to-morrow night," he muttered, recalling its contents. "What can that mean? I am certain the note was written yesterday. Perhaps it was for her to meet him at Dover, at nine to-night. That seems a very plausible conjecture."

While he was engaged in these reflections, the carriage drew up to the station. Handing the driver his fare, he passed in, and demanded to see the superintendent. That official appeared, and Laromie stated his business, which was to learn whether Madame R—— had started for Calais that afternoon. The ticket-seller was called, and he remembered selling a ticket to London to a lady answering to the description given by Laromie. It was very unfortunate, the superintendent said, but it would be useless to telegraph to Calais to stop the lady, as she was, by this time, safe in England, and on her way to London, having left Paris at one o'clock in the afternoon.

Laromie was thoroughly vexed, and, in a not very pleasant voice, asked the ticket-seller if he had sold a ticket to any one answering to M. Vilele's description, which he gave him. No such person had purchased a ticket.

"Who is the person, monsieur?" asked the superintendent.

"Monsieur Vilele, the banker."

"What do you want with him? I have a reason for asking this question."

"I have orders from the government to arrest him."

"*Diable!*" exclaimed the superintendent, starting to his feet. "This explains the whole matter. Monsieur Vilele left here at a little after nine o'clock to-night, in a special train for Calais."

"Who dared allow him to leave Paris?" cried Laromie, furiously.

"I allowed him, monsieur," said the superintendent. "Monsieur Vilele's passport was correct, and I have never heard anything to cause me to think it improper for him to leave Paris."

"True," muttered the detective. "This comes of the government keeping the affair secret. What reason did Monsieur Vilele give for wanting a special train?" he asked, turning to the official.

"He said he had a large amount of money at stake in London, and that it was neces-

sary for him to reach there by the morning. He paid a thousand francs for a locomotive and one car."

"Monsieur," said Laromie, "my orders are positive to arrest the man. I cannot disregard them. I am authorized by the Minister of the Interior to demand your assistance. I must go in pursuit of this man."

"How can it be done?" asked the superintendent. "I am ready to comply with any demands you may make upon me."

"You have a double track to Calais?"

"Yes."

"How many trains are on their way here by the upper track to-night?"

"Two. One will start from Calais at midnight."

"Telegraph to them to remain over at such stations as you think best, until I pass them. Then give me the best locomotive you have, and I will give chase on the upper track."

"Would it not be well to telegraph them at Calais to arrest him?"

"No. He might escape. I am confident of overhauling him in time to prevent his leaving the country."

"He has a fast train, monsieur."

"Perhaps so, but I shall catch him. How long has it been since he left?"

"The train started at a quarter after nine," said the agent, looking at his watch, "and he has been gone an hour and ten minutes, making it now twenty-five minutes after ten. But come, Monsieur Laromie, you have no time to lose."

Laromie followed the agent through the station to where the locomotives were kept. One of the largest and best, which was to take the midnight train from Paris already had steam up, and Laromie at once decided to start with it. Some little arrangements had to be made by the engineer before they could begin their journey, and it was fully eleven o'clock when everything was declared in readiness. As Laromie mounted to the platform where the engineer stood awaiting him, he repeated his caution to the superintendent to be sure and have the up trains warned to keep out of the way.

"Fear nothing, monsieur," was the reply. "You will have a clear road. May success attend you."

The next moment the rush of steam through the cylinders, and the creaking of the ponderous driving wheels announced that the chase had begun.

"They are an hour and three quarters ahead of us," said Laromie, to the engineer. "We must make good time to catch them."

The engineer smiled.

"They will not travel as fast as we shall," he said; "and besides, the 'Hercules' is the best locomotive on the line. You were fortunate in securing it, monsieur."

There were only three persons on the locomotive, the detective, the engineer and the stoker. It was a powerful engine, and being unincumbered with a train of carriages, had nothing to impede its flight. The last barrier was passed, the city was left behind, and the speed of the engine was increased. They rattled furiously through the suburban towns, never pausing for a moment, their coming having been already announced by the telegraph all along the road. The railway officials at each station turned out to watch the novel sight of a down train on the upper track, unable to account for the phenomenon. A flash and a roar mingled with a shrill scream from the whistle, and the locomotive appeared to their astonished gaze, dashing along at a rate far greater than was permitted to the fastest express train on the line. The next instant it was gone, and when its clattering had died out in the distance, they commenced to speculate at random as to the meaning of the strange affair.

Meanwhile the iron horse was dashing on, on with the speed of the wind. It was a lovely night. The clear starlight made every object distinctly visible, and the air cool and bracing. Laromie watched the steam-gage closely. The indicator rose higher and higher as the pressure of the steam became greater, and the pace of the iron horse grew faster. Here a river flashed for a moment in the starlight, as the iron wheels crashed over the bridge, and the next instant it was lost in the gloom. There the lights of a town glittered brightly, and then seemed to vanish at the unearthly shrieks of the flaming monster as it sped through their midst. On, on they dashed, the engineer standing motionless, with his hand on the lever, and his swarthy face lighted up with an unearthly glare by the red flames of the furnace. On, on, on, and they were steadily gaining on the fugitive. Twice they stopped for water and fuel, and each time heard news that cheered them.

Laromie stood like one entranced. The novelty of the situation, the bewildering

speed with which he was whirled through the country, completely bewildered him, so that he took no heed of the flight of time. The cool night breeze swept by him with such force that it almost took his breath; the trees of the forests seemed to be one unbroken wooden wall; the towns were a confused line of white and flame, and the rivers were but silvery flashes across the dark surface of the pathway of the iron horse. He had never witnessed such a scene before. The locomotive shook like an aspen under the rapid motion of the machinery, and he feared it might not be able to continue such an exertion, and the banker might escape him, after all."

"Monsieur," said the engineer, to whom he mentioned his fear, "dread nothing. The 'Hercules' is a giant, and will not disappoint you. I am well pleased with its behaviour thus far. We shall be in Calais as soon as our friends in the special train."

At A—— they stopped again for fuel and water. There, to his great joy, Laromie learned that the special train was only ten minutes ahead of them. They had indeed made good time, and the engineer had not exaggerated the merits of the "Hercules." Now they seemed to fly through the country. In half an hour the engineer touched Laromie, and pointed towards the front of the locomotive. A small red light some distance in the advance was all that could be seen.

"It is the special train," said the engineer, quietly, as he opened the valve still wider. The "Hercules" literally jumped forward. The light in the distance grew brighter and larger, and soon the train itself could be seen distinctly. Ten minutes more, and they were near enough to distinguish objects on it by the light of the lamps in the carriage and locomotive.

Laromie could see that the compartment nearest the engine was the only one occupied, and in a few minutes he noticed that the attention of the solitary passenger was attracted by the approach of the "Hercules." He could see him throw open the window, and gaze out into the darkness. Then the window at the end which communicated with the locomotive was opened, and he could see the passenger gesticulating vehemently to the engineer. Immediately the train shot forward.

"They will escape us," cried Laromie, furiously. "They are increasing their speed."

"Monseigneur," said the engineer, as quietly as ever, "you are on the 'Hercules.' Fear nothing."

He opened the valve to its fullest extent as he spoke, and again stood motionless and silent, with his eye fixed on the gage, which now clearly indicated that there was danger if this furious speed was kept up. It would not be needed much longer. They were rapidly nearing Calais, and already they could smell the fresh seabreeze as it came over the country from the channel. Laromie now noticed that the special train was slackening its speed. In a moment the "Hercules" flew by it.

"They have reversed their course," he cried. "They are going back, and we shall lose them, after all."

"Ciel!" exclaimed the engineer. "They will be ruined. The train we passed an hour ago is coming on right after them, and they will meet it before they can reach a station. What madness! They will be dashed to pieces, for a collision is inevitable."

He turned his attention towards checking his own headway, and, upon accomplishing this, hurried back after the special train, whose lights had now disappeared in the distance. It was a thrilling moment. Those on the engine knew that the object of their pursuit was doomed, and Laromie felt that the banker would escape him, after all, for it was more than probable that he would be killed in the collision. At that moment the thought flashed across his mind that he was forcing M. Vilele upon his death. But no, he reasoned, he was simply obeying his orders, and the banker had taken upon himself the responsibility of running back upon the wrong track. He could only abide the issues, feeling that he was simply doing his duty.

The lights of the doomed train now came in sight, and the "Hercules" dashed on even faster. The hope of the engineer was to overtake the train, and warn it of its danger. They were running through an open plain, at the further end of which they could distinguish the heavy outlines of a forest. There was not more than a mile between the two locomotives, and it seemed not unlikely the warning would be given in time.

Vain hope! At this moment a dull red glare shot up from the line of the distant woods. It grew brighter and brighter every second.

"*Mon Dieu!*" cried the engineer, "we are

too late. It is the night express. They are lost."

The speed of the "Hercules" was slackened, and the whistle blown violently to warn all parties of their danger. They saw it at last, but not in time to avert it. A minute more, and there was a crash and a shock, which threw the special train off the rails, and broke the locomotive and forward carriage of the express train to pieces, killing and wounding nearly a dozen persons. When the "Hercules" came up, the scene was frightful beyond description.

Laromie's first care was to spring from the engine, and search for M. Vilele. Hastening to where the ruins of the special train were heaped, he saw that his search was ended. The carriage had been entirely demolished, and the banker, who was its only occupant, was lying amid the wreck, dead, and horribly mutilated. The engineer had both legs broken, and the stoker had been killed. Securing the engineer of the special train whom he justly regarded as responsible for the catastrophe, Laromie mounted the "Hercules" again, and hastened to the nearest station, from which relief was despatched to the scene of the accident.

The engineer was brought to trial for the murder of the persons killed by the collision, as by running back on the wrong track he had violated both the laws of the road and the country. He stated that M. Vilele upon seeing the "Hercules" approaching them, had supposed that he was pursued, and had offered him six thousand francs if he would reach the station they had last passed through before the arrival of the night express train. He had tried to do so, tempted by the large reward, and the collision had ensued. The engineer was found guilty, and duly executed.

THE BATTLE OF BANNOCKBURN.

BY GEORGE H. COOMER.

I HAVE always thought the victory at Bannockburn the most heart-stirring achievement in all the record of arms. It was so decisive, so complete, the oppressor was so utterly trampled to dust. For twenty years the Scots had suffered the most outrageous wrong; but here, at last, was the reckoning. On this one tremendous field the debt of vengeance was paid to the full.

But why should the Scots, so often defeated by their English foes, have been victorious here? To the reflective mind the reason is evident. The great climax was reached through a hundred disappointments, every one of which had taught its lesson. Let us read the story of the fight, and we shall see that nothing was left to chance. There was no blind dash for freedom, with a dependence simply upon the justice of the cause; but the result was due to toil, to foresight, and to preparation.

Bruce was one of the most able generals that ever lived. This is shown in the faultless disposition which he made of his little army of thirty thousand men, wherewith he overcame the immense host of his enemy, one hundred and twenty thousand strong. The victory was gained by no hurry, by no accident, by no reckless venture, by no wild shouts of Scotland's wrong or of Scotland's right; but it was the consequence of an admirably planned battle, fought from the gray of morning till the sun rode at high noon.

True, it was long ago—five hundred and fifty-nine years have passed since then—yet the freshness of the story has never faded, and can never fade. How comprehensive was the genius of the Scottish king! With what care was every manœuvre of the enemy anticipated and provided for! The Scottish army had the advantage of more homogeneity than the English; for although the Highlander, the Islesman and the Borderer were there, they were all Scotch to the very heart; while on the other hand, the host of Edward Second was composed, together with his English subjects, of Welsh, Irish and Normans.

Sir Henry de Bohun, or Boune, as the name is sometimes spelled, was, as the

reader must well remember, the first man who fell at Bannockburn. The armies, it will be recollected, were in plain sight of each other, separated only by a distance of three bow-shots, when King Robert Bruce, mounted on a small palfrey, and armed only with sword and battle-axe, rode along the Scottish line to review the various divisions of his force. By the gold star that gleamed upon his helmet, no less than from his stalwart figure, he was recognized by the enemy. Sir Henry de Boune, mounted on a mail-clad war-horse, to whose career the slight palfrey of Bruce could have proved scarce any obstacle, instantly laid his long lance in rest, and at headlong speed charged upon the King of Scots.

But the result of that charge was disheartening to the host of England as to the Philistines was the fall of the man of Gath. We read in history that "Robert engaged with Henry de Bohun, at the head of the English cavalry, and with his battle-axe cleft his head to his chin.

Scott, in his "Lord of the Isles," while recounting the deeds at Bannockburn, adheres very closely to history. Of this first stirring incident of the battle, he says:

"The partridge may the falcon mock,
If that slight palfrey stand the shock;
But, swerving from the knight's career,
Just as they met, Bruce shunned the spear.
Onward the baffled warrior bore
His course—but soon his course was o'er!
High in his stirrups stood the king,
And gave his battle-axe the swing.
Right on de Boune, the whiles he passed,
Fell that stern dint—the first—the last!
Such strength upon the blow was put,
The helmet crashed like hazel-nut;
The axe shaft, with its brazen clasp,
Was shivered to the gauntlet grasp."

On the same afternoon a body of English cavalry, in attempting to double the left flank of the Scots, was totally defeated by the gallant Earl of Moray, and this skirmish ended the operations until the morrow. The first attack at morning was made by the English archers, and it was terrible. The archery of England was always more formidable than that of any of her enemies.

"Nor paused on the devoted Scot,
The ceaseless fury of their shot;
As fiercely and as fast,
Forth whistling came the gray goose wing,
As the wild hailstones pelt and ring
Adown December's blast.
Nor mountain targe, of tough bull hide,
Nor lowland mail, that storm may bide;
Woe, woe to Scotland's bannered pride,
If the fell shower may last!"

Against a weak commander an attack like this might have prevailed, as it would have been impossible for the Scottish line to have long remained unbroken; but here we perceive an instance of the foresight of King Robert. Near this very spot, and concealed behind a wood, he had previously posted his brother Edward and Lord Reith, Marshal of Scotland, with a formidable body of horse armed with lances and clad in mail.

"The shield hangs down on every breast,
Each ready lance is laid in rest,
And loud shouts Edward Bruce—
'Forth, Marshal! on the peasant foe!
We'll tame the terrors of their bow,
And cut the bowstring loose!'"

The charge of the Scottish gentry was performed with tremendous effect. Arrows, and bows, and men were levelled and trodden in one prodigious swarth, as the sweeping war steeds, heavy with armor, sprang at a frantic gallop through the thick ranks of the English archers.

"No spears were there, the shock to let,
No stakes to turn the charge were set;
And how shall yeoman's armor slight
Stand the long lance and mace of might?"

The slaughter at this point was terrific; but although the Scots were here completely successful, the overwhelming number of the English army still rendered doubtful the result of the main battle. Edward Second ordered his cavalry to charge. The Scottish infantry, drawn up along a plain, presented a tempting appearance to the swords and hoofs of this great body of horse, and the English king had little doubt that upon this charge hung the fate of the battle—as indeed it did, though not in the manner which he anticipated.

The King of Scotland, conceiving the probability of just such a charge, upon ground so suited to cavalry operations, had prepared for it in such a way as to make the onset most terribly react upon itself.

"To rightward of the wild affray,
The field showed fair and level way;
But, in mid space, the Bruce's care
Had bored the ground with many a pit,
With turf and brushwood hidden yet,
That formed a ghastly snare.
Rushing, ten thousand horsemen came,
With spears in rest, and hearts on flame,
That panted for the shock!
With blazing crests, and banners spread,
And trumpet clang and clamor dread,
The wide plain thundered to their tread,
As far as Stirling rock.
Down! down! in headlong overthrow,
Horsemen and horse, the foremost go,
Wild floundering on the field!
The first are in destruction's gorge,
Their followers wildly o'er them urge;
The knightly helm and shield,
The mail, the acorn, and the spear,
Strong hand, high heart, are useless here!
Loud from the mass confused the cry
Of dying warriors swells on high,
And steeds that shriek in agony!"

This was the turning point of the great battle of Bannockburn. Still, however, the English fought with stubborn courage; but Bruce, well knowing that all depended upon pushing his advantage to the utmost, now charged them with horse and foot. Never did a battle depend more upon strength and desperate courage.

"Some fought from ruffian thirst of blood,
From habit some and hardihood;
But ruffian stern and soldier good,
The noble and the slave,
From various cause the same wild road,
On the same bloody morning trode,
To that dark inn, the grave!"

Both armies were becoming exhausted with their prodigious efforts; but the Scotch, inspired by the success already achieved, kept heart and strength far better than their enemies. Slowly their small but immortal army pushed back the great host of England, yet those almost endless ranks seemed still to promise a tedious fight. In this state of the battle, the genius of King Robert instantly comprehended the relative positions of himself and his foes. The vastly outnumbering enemy must not be permitted to rest. Whatever the weariness of his soldiers, in a renewed and decisive onset lay his surest salvation. And what a charge was that led by the stalwart king!

"At once the spears were forward thrown,
Against the sun the broadswords shone;
The pibroch lent its maddening tone,

And loud King Robert's voice was known—
'Carriock, press on—they fall, they fall!
Press on, brave sons of Innisgail,
The foe is fainting fast!
Each strike for parent, child and wife,
For Scotland, liberty and life—
The battle cannot last! "

The tide was now fearfully ebbing with the English, yet again and again they rallied, though each time more faintly than before. It was at this moment, as the reader will remember, that the final stratagem of King Robert put the climax upon his great victory. He had placed two thousand women, children, and other camp followers, behind an eminence in the rear of his line, and these, at a signal, now suddenly made their appearance and began marching along the high land, with banners displayed like those of a warlike host. The effect upon the English was prodigious; they no longer disputed the field, and the rout, already partially accomplished, now became general.

Never was there a more complete victory in any pitched battle. With terrible energy King Robert pursued his enemy. For more than ninety miles King Edward Second rode at frantic speed; and he had good reason, for Douglas and Moray were hard upon his track; but he escaped, to reflect at leisure upon his tremendous overthrow.

I have drawn largely upon Sir Walter Scott, partly because of the force and beauty

of his poetry, and partly because of its faithfulness to the historic record. How vivid his picture of the death of Lord Colonsay, while chasing the routed enemy! It will be recollected that the English nobleman de Argentine refused to retreat further, but, turning upon the pursuing Scots, overthrew no less than four of them. He was in the meantime wounded.

"A lance's point
Has found his breastplate's loosened joint,
An axe has razed his crest;
Yet still on Colonsay's fierce lord,
Who pressed the chase with gory sword,
He rode with spear in rest,
And through his bloody tartans bored,
And through his gallant breast.
Nailed to the earth, the mountaineer
Yet writhed him up against the spear,
And swung his broadsword round!
Stirrup, steel boot and cuish gave way,
Beneath that blow's tremendous sway,
The blood gushed from the wound;
And the grim Lord of Colonsay
Hath turned him on the ground,
And laughed in death pang that his blade
The mortal thrust so well repaid."

It was by no lovelorn heroes that the battle of Bannockburn was won, and a nation delivered forever. It was by men who could laugh when pinned upon a lance-point, if only their dying blow might bring revenge.

THE DIAMOND CROSS.

Angier, Frank H

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THE DIAMOND CROSS.

BY FRANK H. ANGIER.

THE most experienced and sagacious of detectives are not always successful. We of the force are, like other men, fallible, and even the best laid and most carefully followed plans, sometimes wholly fail to achieve their purpose. I have been many years in the business, and although I have aided in bringing a large number of noted criminals to justice, there have been several instances in which my better judgment has been blinded and my most elaborate traps eluded by the rascals of whom I was in search. It is a terrible aggravation to a detective to find his labor thus set at naught, but of all my failures I never had one that so filled me with chagrin and mortification as one that I once made in New York. It made me appear the more ridiculous because

the case was a very simple one, and the chief actor in it was a woman. To be taken in by a male sharper is bad enough, but to have yourself and your profession laughed at by a woman, is too much for a detective, proud of his sagacity, to bear with equanimity. I don't often care to speak of it, but as I am not likely to be caught in a similar trap again, I don't mind telling you the story in confidence.

The present fashionable generation may not remember the firm of Stephens & Martley, jewellers, who formerly transacted a large business on Broadway, not far from Duane Street. Their store was one day entered by a very beautiful and richly dressed lady, who had left her carriage waiting at the door, and who asked to be shown some

diamond crosses. The salesman exhibited a tray containing a large number of very valuable trinkets of that description, studded with gems of exceeding richness and purity. After considerable hesitation, she finally chose one and inquired the price.

"It is worth thirteen hundred dollars," replied the salesman.

"I will take it," said the lady. "Be good enough to do it up nicely."

"Shall we send it?" asked the salesman, politely.

"No, thank you. I will take it with me."

She tendered in payment two crisp new bills, one of a thousand dollars and one of five hundred. The salesman took them to the cashier, who examined them to see that they were genuine, and opened his drawer to return the necessary change. To his annoyance, he found himself short of small bills, and rather than payout all his change, he sent the two bills back to the customer to ask if she had not the exact amount. The lady examined her portemonnaie, but was unable to find anything but three bills of five hundred each. These would not help the matter, and the cashier paid out his change with reluctance, dashed the two new bills into his drawer, and slammed it to in no very good humor. The lady took the diamonds, swept gracefully out of the store, entered her carriage and was driven rapidly away. In fifteen minutes afterward the cashier, having occasion to open his drawer, was attracted by a peculiar line on the thousand dollar note. He examined it closely, and at once pronounced both bills to be counterfeit. The lady had cleverly changed the notes when they had been returned to her.

It was then too late to trace the fair swindler. I was sent for by the firm, but an inquiry into the facts of the case did not permit me to offer any strong hope of recovering the diamonds or the two hundred dollars. The salesman was sure that he would know the face again, and he remembered that the lady was dressed in blue silk with a lace shawl. He could recollect nothing more, except that he thought the carriage had wheels with gilded hubs and spokes. This was slight material, but I made the necessary notes in my memorandum book, and left the store.

For several days after that I kept a sharp lookout in the streets for a carriage with gold wheels. I visited all the livery stables and hackney coach stands that I could think of,

but my search was in vain. At last, passing one day through Bleeker Street, I met a carriage driving rapidly toward Broadway. Its description answered very well to that which Stephens & Martley's salesman had given me, but a glance inside showed me that it was empty. I stopped it, however, and cross-questioned the driver. The carriage was a public one, and the driver remembered taking a lady in blue silk, four or five days previously, to Stephens & Martley's. So far, I was on the right track, but the trail was soon lost again. In answer to my questioning the man said that the lady had taken his carriage at Union Square, where it was then standing, and after visiting the jewelry store, had been driven to a dry goods store on Chatham Square, where she dismissed him. He did not notice whether she entered the store or not, and he had never seen her since.

I took the man's number, and looked well at his carriage and horses. Having thus mentally photographed his establishment, I gave him a quarter and let him go. There was nothing more to be done for the present except to telegraph a general description of the woman and the diamond cross, to the principal cities of the country, and to keep an eye on the outward bound steamers for Europe and elsewhere. This I managed to do without much difficulty while attending to other business. More important cases soon engrossed my attention, and the affair of the cross gradually fell into the background, when, after the lapse of several months, I received a telegram from a detective in Boston, stating that a noted gambler called "Jumping Johnny," who had twice been in State Prison for counterfeiting, had been seen in that city lately in suspiciously intimate relations with a woman residing in Columbus Avenue, who answered in some respects to the description of our heroine. The house in Columbus Avenue and the appearance of the woman were altogether too respectable for such close connection with Jumping Johnny, without mischief being in the wind.

I had not the pleasure of Jumping Johnny's acquaintance, but I started that same night for Boston to look at the woman, taking Stephens & Martley's salesman with me to identify her. I procured a couple of officers from the Boston force, and proceeded to the house in Columbus Avenue. It was a large handsome structure of brown stone,

and I noticed that the curtains to all except the lower story were closely drawn. I suspected from this that the upper rooms were all unfurnished, and that the lower and basement floors only were occupied by the inmates, who had doubtless their own reasons for choosing an innocent-looking dwelling in a fashionable quarter, for carrying on a business that might not bear the scrutiny it would be subjected to in a more public locality. But this, of course, was all guess-work.

I posted an officer on the curbstone before the house, and another in the rear alley, with instructions to keep his eye on the back gate and the roof.

"I don't want Jumping Johnny," I explained to these sentinels. "I am after the wench who stole our diamonds. If you see a woman come out, detain her."

I did not care to trouble Jumping Johnny because, firstly, I had no evidence whatever that he was implicated in the diamond swindle, and secondly because I was employed to recover Stephens & Martley's property, and to find the party who stole it, and it was not my business to ferret out counterfeiters. I reserved that part of the affair for a separate job.

The name on the doorplate was simply "D'Orsay." I rang the bell, and after some delay, during which I detected a pair of eyes scrutinizing us from behind the basement blinds, the door was partly opened by a very angular servant with a shock of fiery-red hair, who placed her anatomy in the aperture and demanded our business.

"I would like to see Madame D'Orsay, if you please. Is she at home?"

"I don't know."

"Be good enough to find out, if you please. Our business is very important."

"What is it?"

I placed my finger on my lips mysteriously.

"It wouldn't do to tell it here in the street," I said. "I saw a cop on the sidewalk out here."

The girl looked wise and returned my *wlukk*. "O! you belong to *them*, do ye?" she observed. "Well, walk in."

She ushered us into a large parlor, handsomely furnished, and left us alone. In a few moments, we saw through the open door an elegantly dressed lady descending the stairs.

"By heavens!" exclaimed the salesman, starting. "That's the woman who bought the cross."

I was on the right track then, at last. She entered the room with a queenly step and stood still, looking at us inquiringly. She was certainly the most beautiful woman I ever saw, before or since. She evidently had no remembrance of my companion, or if she did, she concealed her recognition of him admirably.

"This gentleman," I said, rising and pointing to my companion, "is from the firm of Stephens & Martley, of New York."

She turned very pale and grasped the back of a chair quickly for support.

"I, madam," I continued, "am an officer of the detective police. We have called in relation to a certain diamond cross purchased by you from Stephens & Martley several months ago, which was paid for in counterfeit notes."

She sank into a chair, pale as death, and trembling in every limb.

"What is the penalty?" she asked.

"We will talk of that afterwards," I said. "Is the cross still in your possession?"

She brightened up at that, and looked at me eagerly.

"It is," she said. "Will you let me go if I return the cross and the money? O sir, please let me go. You only want the property back, surely. I will pay that and more too, if you will not take me away."

It was hard to resist this sort of talk. She sat there wringing her hands, and with her beautiful eyes suffused with tears—a picture to melt a heart of stone.

"You don't know what it is," she said, "to be forced to lead a life like mine. You don't know what it is to be compelled to it by one who owns your body and soul, as mine is owned. God know I would be better if I could."

"Is Jumping Johnny your husband?"

She looked around her a little fearfully, and answered. "No."

"Our object," I said, "is principally to recover our property, but I don't purpose to make any promises beforehand. Return the cross and the two hundred dollars, and we will consider your case afterward."

She arose to leave the room, and for the first time it struck me how short she was, even for a woman. Her proud queenly carriage had something to do, perhaps, with my first impression, for I had taken her for a tall woman. I now saw that she was of quite *petite* figure, hardly larger than a girl of twelve.

She passed into a room immediately back of the parlor, and closed the door. I told my companion to step into the hall and keep his eye on the other door, while I remained in the parlor. I had no fear of the bird's escape, for I had a pretty accurate mental plan of the house in my head, and I knew she could not leave it without being seen by my men outside. She was absent a very long time, during which I heard an animated discussion going on in the adjoining room, in which the shrill tones of a child's voice could be plainly distinguished. The words, however, were unintelligible.

I had become thoroughly tired of waiting, and was on the point of making a disturbance, when the door opened and a hideously deformed boy appeared, limping on a crutch. He was humpbacked, and a dreadful scrofulous mark disfigured one half of his ugly face. As he opened and closed the door, I caught a glimpse of Madame D'Orsay seated in an armchair, with a lace handkerchief to her eyes, evidently weeping.

"Mother told me to give this to you," said the dwarf, in the same shrill cracked voice which I had lately overheard. "She will be out herself in a moment. You won't arrest her, will you, sir?"

"I don't know," I answered shortly, taking the diamond cross and putting it in my pocket. "Where are the two hundred dollars?"

"I'm going out to get this changed," said the boy, holding up a five hundred dollar bill. "If you will wait a minute, I will bring back the money."

I let him go, and he limped out the front door and down the street, dragging his club foot painfully after him. I was glad to have the hideous little monster out of my sight.

I waited some fifteen or twenty minutes after that, but neither Madame D'Orsay nor the boy put in an appearance. At last my patience became exhausted, and I tried the door leading into the inner room. It opened readily, but there was no one in the apartment except Madame herself, who still sat in the armchair before the dressing-table, with her face buried in her handkerchief.

"Come, come," I said, "this won't do. You've had time enough to cry in. Put on your things and follow me. I've some friends outside who are waiting for you."

A loud coarse laugh greeted this speech, as I tapped the woman gently on the shoulder. The handkerchief fell, and disclosed

the features of the bony servant girl who had admitted us to the house. Her lovely person was dressed in her mistress's clothes, and her fiery shock of hair was concealed by a blonde wig, the exact counterpart of the madam's own hair, which was a wig itself, for all I know.

"Ye thought it was the lady of the house, did ye?" exclaimed this interesting female, jumping up. "Well, ye see it isn't. Thanks to your politeness in waiting so long, the madam has got well out of your reach by this time, if her crutch and that beautiful club foot don't interfere with her speed."

"Ten thousand furies!" exclaimed I, seizing her roughly by the arm and shaking her, "do you mean to say—"

"Yes I do," she replied, with a broad grin. "Ye couldn't bring yourself to believe that her pretty ladyship could make herself so ugly, could ye? Mister Policeman, you're nicely sold."

I dropped her arm, and seizing the salesman as I ran through the hall, dragged him out of the house.

"The bird has escaped us," I said, as soon as we reached the sidewalk and I could recover my breath. "Madame D'Orsay has given us the slip, but we have recovered the cross at all events."

I took the jewel from my pocket, and handed it to him. He took it, and turned it over and over in the sunlight.

"It's a beautiful thing," I remarked, looking over his shoulder.

"Yes," he said "it is a beautiful thing."

"Those diamonds are of unusual brilliancy," I ventured again, as he continued to examine it.

"Yes," he replied—"of unusual brilliancy—*for paste!* In fact they are the best imitation I ever saw."

"Isn't that your cross?" I exclaimed, in tones of thunder.

"The setting is ours," he said. "The diamonds are probably of Jumping Johnny's own manufacture."

It could not be helped. The clever woman had walked off under my very nose, with her stealings in her pocket. We went back to New York that night, and I gave up all further attempts to trace her. From information that I afterwards received from Jumping Johnny, I suspected that the couple had gone to Europe. Perhaps Madame D'Orsay has ere this found her match among my brother detectives across the water.

PATENT COUPLER'S PECULIARITIES.

THE DISCHARGED ENGINEER.

He was an old man, and he had been discharged from the V. T. & W. He was an engineer, and had served the company with all his might for thirty years. He had a limp, and two fingers one joint short had been gotten in the service. Now, after thirty years of faithful service he was discharged because he had forgotten, once in all those years, to light the headlight of his engine.

"They've switched me off, Jimmie," he said to a friend; "after all the years I've done 'em good service they've cut me loose. I'm as helpless as a broken flat-bottom car upon a side track. I can't do anything else. I've learned nothing new, and what little I knew before going on the road I've forgot."

"Never mind," said Jimmie; "turn on the steam, hang to the throttle, see that your boiler's full and go ahead. Don't give up. You may strike a lightning express in other business, and then you can shake your fingers at the old V. T. & W."

"There aint five chances to one I'll do it. I'll have to go 'butchering' on the accommodation; that's all I can do."

"Lay back on your tender, boy. Don't get excited. Slow up over switches and mind the bell. You're on a steep grade now, and there's a sharp curve in the road, but you'll bring up at the station with your train all with you!"

"Don't believe it, Jimmie, but wish I might though. My cylinders leak and my boiler is about played out. There's only \$20 in the pay car, and a wife and child at home! It'll soon be exhausted, and then—" and the old man put his hands before his face and wept.

It was too bad! It was even worse; it was outrageous. But the cast-iron heart of a railroad corporation knows no feeling.

I saw the old man towards night intoxicated. Yes, he had sought consolation in

the drink, which for a time drowns all trouble, but which at the last makes it more bitter. He was staggering along the highway, and out of sympathy I went to him and offered to assist him. He said:

"There aint but one engineer on this train, sir. I pulls this train."

And I went on and thought verily the old man did pull that train, but the devil had switched him off the straight road.

I saw the old man again. This time after dark. He was clinging to a lamppost.

"Don't you think you have a heavy load on?" I asked.

"Yes sir! But the old 24 is good for all you can crowd on. 130 pounds to the square inch and the safety valve tied down!"

Later that evening, as I was going home, I saw him lying in the gutter. I bent over him and said:

"Old man, has the boiler bursted, or the engine jumped the track?"

"Both," said he; "both! And I'm under the fire-box and can't get out!"

I helped him up and started him on.

"No use," he said. "My headlight's out and the water is low. I'm on a strange track and down grade, and go by the stations like sixty. Send a flagman ahead!"

The next day I happened in at the police court, and there I saw the old man.

"Hello! so you've reached the station at last!"

"Yes," said he; "the time's fast. It's the quickest time I ever made on any road. I've quit, I'll never run another such train."

"Stick to it!" I said.

"You bet! I'll put fresh oil in the cans, and the air brakes in good order, and if ever I get on such a road as that again I'll turn 'em on mighty sudden. The old 24 never went into the ditch before, and she never will again."

And again I repeated: "Stick to it!"

A Michigan man visiting in Eastern New York, was asked by two well-educated young ladies many questions pertaining to the West. "How far west have you been?" one inquired. "Chicago," answered the gentleman. "Way out there!" exclaimed

the first young lady. "I've heard much about the bulls of New York City. I suppose the bears are in Chicago. My! I'd think you'd be afraid to go about with bears running loose in the streets!" And the best part of the joke is that it is the truth.

As I was walking along Boren Street one afternoon I found a plain gold ring. The next day, an advertisement which I had inserted in a daily, brought many responses. The advertisement read:

FOUND—On Boren Street, yesterday afternoon, a fine plain gold ring. Owner can have it by calling at No. 183 Sixth Avenue, and paying for this advertisement.

About eight o'clock I received my first call. It was a female caller, and she said:

"An good mornin' to ye. I called fur th' ring yer be after advertisin'."

"Ah! it was a beautiful silver ring, wasn't it?" I asked.

"To be sure it was! Do ye think I'd be after wearin' an ould tin one?"

"It had a photograph of a lovely young lady on the inside?"

"In course it did!"

"And an inscription on the inside?"

"To be sure it's th' description!"

"And a small door by which the wearer could enter the ring?"

"A which?"

"A door. Sort of a closet, you know?"

"A door is it?"

"Yes!"

"A door in a ring?"

"Of course!"

"Bedad, now, come down wid your ring. By hokey it's my ring yev got and yer can't bate me out of it in that way!"

"But your ring didn't have a door in it!"

And she left.

The next claimant was a nice sweet-looking young lady.

"You advertised a ring this morning?"

"Yes ma'm."

"I called to get it."

"Is it your ring, ma'm?"

"Yes sir."

I was about to give it to her, when I said:

"Will you please describe it?"

"It was a plain gold ring, sir."

"Will you tell me the inscription on the inside?"

"I—I don't remember!" and she left.

I watched her till I saw a fellow come out of a saloon and join her, and then I went in and sat down to my desk, and felt bad to think that such a nice appearing young woman had cheek enough to try to beat me out of the ring.

Next came a Dutchman.

"Py golly! I've gum for dat ring!"

"What ring?"

"Vat ring? Vy der splain gold ring vat you advertises dis morning."

"What kind of a ring was it?"

"Seven cat-tails! Vy a splain gold ring!"

"Have any mark on it?"

"Mark! Vot for don't you give me mein ring und stop asking about marks?"

"I guess you haven't lost any ring."

"Not lost any ring! I'll have you arrested mit slander, by shimmy!"

He too left, and pretty soon came a gentleman.

"Ah! he! Good-day! fine morning! As I was walking along Boren Street I lost a ring from my finger. I called to get it. The one you found is probably it."

"Very likely! When did you lose it?"

"O yes. When did I—when—O, it was a plain gold one."

"When did you lose it?"

"My mind is very treacherous. I really don't remember the exact hour."

"But the day?"

"Day! yes it was in the daytime. It is a plain gold one."

"I mean what day in the week?"

"In a week. Yes it was within a week."

"But what day?"

"There you have me! My treacherous memory! I can never remember anything, but I think it was Tuesday."

"What is the inscription on the inside?"

"There you have me again."

"I will have to insist upon the question being answered before I can deliver the ring."

"Inscription! Inscription! I don't believe you have my ring. Good morning," and he left.

Then came a blind old man whom some one had told that I had his ring—the one lost on Boren Street; and next a woman who had lost the ring while on her way to the pawnbroker's, for it was a memento which she was forced to pawn for bread, and then in bounced a woman who said:

"Called after that ring."

"Yes ma'm. Please describe it."

"Describe it! No indeed! Do you mean to insult me?"

"By no means. But you will have to describe it before I can give it to you."

"O, very well; but I thought you were a gentleman!"

I winced at this.
 "Well it was a plain gold ring."
 "Yes."
 "The ring was plain."
 "Yes."
 "A plain gold ring was the one I lost."
 "Yes."
 "A gold ring which is plain I lost on Boren Street."
 "Yes."
 "Well why don't you give it to me?"
 "Anything else about it except its plainness?"
 "It was one I had made to order."
 "It was a plain gold one, was it?"
 "Yes sir."
 "It was perfectly plain?"
 "It was."
 "It is a gold ring which is plain."
 "Yes."
 "It is a ring which is gold and plain."
 "Yes."
 "A good deal of plainness about it, aint there?"
 "Well it *was* plain!" she snapped.
 "Perfectly?"
 "Exactly! Just the one I lost."
 "Now wasn't there an inscription;—just the littlest mite of an inscription on the in-

side? Something like this: 'From John to Mary?'"

"How stupid! Of course there was!"
 "And isn't there, now, not the least bit of a scratch on the outside? Such as would be made by two hands with rings on the same finger coming together?"

"Yes—ye—s—s—sir!"
 "And now upon the inside, besides the inscription, isn't there sort of a heart with an arrow sticking in it?"

"Certainly!"
 "Sure?"
 "Of course!"
 "Well, madam, the ring I have is perfectly plain—not the scratch of a pin upon it."

"Wretch!" she hissed, and swept out of the office as grandly as a Centennial Exhibition on stilts.

Now this is all. It does not end as it should, I admit. It ought to have turned out that the owner of the ring was a lovely pink-eyed girl, whose mother was cross, etc.; and that I married her and went to Niagara Falls, and that I'd paid twenty dollars' hack hire. But I believe in stating things as they are, even if a good story is spoiled thereby.

THREESCORE AND TEN.

An old man threescore and ten stood upon the street corner the other day, and the tears crept into his eyes and rolled down his furrowed countenance, and fell upon his soiled linen, leaving white spots where the dirt was washed away, making his bosom look like the sky, with a whole lot of little stars shining from it.

Now isn't that a nice way of putting it? I could just as well have said shirt, instead of linen; breast, instead of bosom; dirty, instead of soiled; face, instead of countenance; and so on. I might have used these words in place of the ones I did use, but I think an old man has just as much right to be spoken of in choice language as a young man, or a steamboat clerk, or any one else. Well, as I was saying, he stood upon the street corner, and the tears rolled down his furrowed countenance, for he was a very old man and he had just taken his last chew of tobacco. He was homeless, and penniless, and his parents were dead, and he knew no one in the strange city.

"Never mind," said he, "the Lord will provide!"

"Yes, my hearty, He will provide you a safe place if you don't move on!" and a policeman motioned him to move on.

The old man moved on a short distance; and, as he looked into the show window of a great jewelry establishment, an evil thought rose in his mind.

"So near and yet so far!" he murmured.

"Near enough to nab you if you don't move on!" and the same cruel monster of an officer pointed down the street, for him to move on.

A sigh heaved off from the old man's heavy heart, and he "moved on."

He had eaten nothing since morning, except two dishes of raw oysters and four sandwiches, and he was hungry. He stopped by a bakery and gazed in at the door.

"The Lord loveth a cheerful giver," he said.

"Giver! giver! Thunder in a molasses cask! If you don't move on, I'll jug you!"

He cast a glance of scorn at the officer, but moved on.

The officer followed him, and he turned and asked him for five dollars, and when the officer refused him he said:

"Vengeance is mine, says the Lord!"

"Vengeance! Daniel Webster in a green apple tree! I'll nab you if I see you on this street again."

He cast a look of disdain at the officer and went on. His hunger was almost unbearable. He chewed with fierceness the tobacco in his mouth. His last chew! He entered a restaurant and called for sirloin steak with mushrooms, quail on toast, an omelet, and a cup of chocolate. After making a hearty repast he got up to leave. He was stopped at the door.

"Four dollars," said the clerk.

"If your enemy is hungry give him bread to eat, and if he is thirsty give him water to drink."

"Four dollars."

"Trust in Providence, for the Lord is your friend."

"Four dollars!"

"Though ten thousand be saved Heaven mourns if—"

"F-o-u-r dollars!"

"Be not afraid—!"

"F-o-u-r d-o-l-l-a-r-s!"

"I haven't a cent in this wide world."

"Swish bang! crump chug!" and the old man reposed upon the sidewalk.

"If you are hit upon one cheek turn and let the other be hit."

"What! here again! M-o-v-e o-n!"

The old man with a high step "moved on." His stomach was full and he felt better. He turned into an alley, and stepped behind a dry-goods box. He took out his purse and counted his money.

"Only eight dollars to-day," said he. "What I'll get from the old iron I stole will make nearly ten, and I know where I can get at least two and a half more. I'm poor I am! And yet you hear people talk of hard times," and then he slipped around to the savings bank, and as he deposited forty dollars with the teller remarked that it was a poor week. "Folks aint more'n half so generous as they once was!" said he.

Poor old man!

There were nine of them, and as they filed into a Denver court-room and remarked: "Well, judge, this trial of Bill Johnson's

discontinued," the justice looked up and said: "Just as you say, gentlemen; just as you say, not as I care!" And the prosecuting attorney echoed: "Yes, certainly!"

When a man files into the sanctum of the Danbury News man, and pulls out a pair of gas-fitter's pinchers and remarks: "Come now, no fooling. You've lied about me so much I'm going to fix you," Bailey just lies back in his chair and props his mouth open with a side-stick, while the angered stranger proceeds to break to pieces as fine a set of \$12 teeth as is manufactured by a Danbury dentist.

A Boston man stopped all night at a Michigan hotel last week, and the next morning objected to paying his bill because he had been unable to sleep on account of bedbugs. "Did they bother you much?" asked the landlord. "Much! Why one fellow was going to throw me from the window!" "Is that so?" exclaimed the landlord; "I'll have to add two dollars extra to your bill." "For what?" "What! Thund'ration, man, that was the Centennial bug, and I charge travellers two dollars extra to sleep with him!" The Bostonian took the first train for home.

Dio Lewis says that oatmeal expands the brain. Acting upon this suggestion a large number of ladies have commenced using it, but somehow it never gets above their neck. Their bust steadily enlarges, but their brain seems to remain about the same.

A man went into an Ann Arbor store the other day and bought four sticks of gum, and yet people will persist in talking of the hard times.

How foolish it is when one person calls another one a liar, for the one so called to get mad and challenge the other man to fight. All this would be done away with if they would allow people to carry pistols the same as they do in Texas. It would be a "click-click-bang"—and then the coroner would come around and pay the shooter five shillings for being a witness. O! why this system of government up North!

A professor of Michigan University says he does not care whether a man spells Smith "Smyth," or "Smithe," or "Smith,"

but when he spells God with a small "g," Heaven with a small "h," and Bible with a small "b," he feels as if, notwithstanding the Centennial, the Republic was going to pot. And yet Wilbur F. Story shouts up the speaking tube to the proof reader: "Didn't I tell you not to capitalize a — thing but my name and the Chicago Times!"

An Ann Arbor man who has a quarrelsome wife, was told by a friend to count ten when his wife jawed, and if she did not stop then to keep right on counting to one hundred. When the married man went home and his wife commenced to jaw, and asked where he had been, he began to count:

"One, two three—"

"Where have you been?" she demanded.

"Four, five, six—"

"Where have you been?" she shrieked.

"Seven, eight, nine, ten—"

"Take that!" and she hit him one on the ear.

"Eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen—"

"Swish swish!"

He pulled the dishcloth out of his mouth and went on:

"Fifteen, sixteen, seventeen—"

He got out from under the piece of carpet, and—

"Eighteen, nineteen, twenty, twenty—"

He extricated his head from the washpail, and continued:

"—One, twenty-two, twenty-three, twenty-four—"

He caught the hoe as she hurled it at him, then—

"Twenty-five, twenty-six, twenty-seven—"

The dishpan interrupted him for an instant only, and he kept right on:

"Twenty-eight, twenty-nine, thirty, thirty-one, thirty-two—"

He dodged the mop, then continued:

"Thirty-three, thirty-four, thirty-five, thirty-six, thirty-seven—"

He stopped the flour sieve, then—

"Thirty-eight, thirty-nine, forty, forty-one, forty-two."

By the time he had reached sixty-five he stood in the midst of everything which could be handled, that was on the premises, and his wife was looking around for something else. When he had reached eighty she began to cool, and by the time ninety

had been counted she was looking kind a sorrowful. When ninety-five had been counted she even began to cry, and when he had counted three times more she said she felt sorry, and when the one hundred had been uttered she threw her arms around his neck and begged his forgiveness. And now they are the happiest pair in Ann Arbor, and are going to the Centennial.

Henry Wilson was once a cobbler, and as a consequence his name has made a lasting impression upon the public.

It has just transpired that the story of George Washington and his little hatchet is a lie. George never owned a hatchet in his life, it belonged to a playmate of his, and therefore when he said: "Father, I cannot tell a lie, I did it with my little hatchet," he did lie, for he said *my* hatchet, when in fact it belonged to his companion. This discovery will have a tendency to decrease his popularity with the people, and historians will be apt to give him the cold shoulder. It looks as if it was a contrived plan on the part of George to keep his companion from sharing in the cherry-tree business.

The cellar window was opened the other fine day, and as the weather changed toward night Douglas's wife asked him to go down and close it before he went to bed. About ten o'clock he went down stairs, and after closing the window looked around for something to eat. He found some "soft cake" and ate about a pound, then went up stairs and went to bed. That night he dreamt all sorts of things. He thought that he was by a well which was full of pure water, and he wanted a drink but the pump failed to work. He seized the handle and pumped with all his might, but the water failed to come. About this time his dream changed. The heel of a woman's shoe struck him near the left ear, and for an instant he thought the cake had come up and lodged in his brain. Again the dream changed, and he was awakened by his wife saying: "You old curmudgeon! I'll teach you to wrench my arm around as if it was hung on a pivot. If you ever come to bed drunk again I'll mash your skull!" Douglas never eats "soft cake" now later than seven o'clock, unless he is going to sleep alone.

THE DROWNED MONK.

BY JAMES D. M'CABE, JR.

To those who have listened to the simple recitals of miracles and visions with which the peasantry of other lands are so fond of favoring the traveller, the story I propose to relate may not be new, but to the greater portion of the readers of this journal it will possess at least the charm of novelty.

As I passed through what was once the ancient kingdom of Castile, some ten years ago, I chanced to stop for the night at a monastery, once rich and powerful, but now almost abandoned. It was a wild dark night, and my guide seemed in no mood to go further, declaring that we would find better accommodations at the monastery than at the village inn, which was distant some four English miles.

We were received at the gateway by a sickly monk, whose dress looked as if it might have been in the possession of the brotherhood since the foundation of the order. In answer to our request to be permitted to pass the night at the monastery, he said he would inform the prior of our arrival, and make known our request to him. So saying, he shut the gate in our faces. After a short absence he returned, and asked us to enter. I dismounted at the gateway, and leaving my mule in the charge of my guide, followed the old monk, who stumbled along as if he feared to fall to pieces at every step.

Passing through the sombre courtyard, and traversing a huge vaulted corridor, we entered a large hall, at the lower end of which a fire was burning. In front of the fire, in a large antique armchair, sat an old man. Near him was another chair, very much like his own. The old man rose as we entered, and by the sign of reverence which the monk who accompanied me made him, I perceived that he was the prior.

He received me with great kindness, but with a certain dignity that at once won my respect, and pointing to the vacant chair, requested that I would be seated.

"You should not have asked permission to enter these walls, my son," he said, as I drew my chair to the fire. "A stranger is always welcome here. Indeed, we see so little of the world around us," he added,

with a peculiar smile, "that we would scarcely know of its existence, did we not sometimes meet its children here. Warm yourself, for the evening has been cold and raw; and when you are comfortable, I will order refreshments to be brought for you."

There was something in his manner so kind and hospitable that I at once felt free from all restraint. During the evening there sprung up between us quite an animated conversation, from which I gathered much interesting information concerning the monastery and its history. I found the prior a finely-educated man and profoundly learned in the history and traditions of his country. He had the most implicit faith in everything connected with his order, and especially his monastery. I was very much surprised to find a man of such splendid attainments so willing to receive and credit the wildest and most improbable stories of miracles and visions. I could attribute it to nothing but the life which he had led from his infancy.

During our conversation he related to me a miracle, which he assured me was performed within the walls of the monastery. The story was so palpably absurd that I could not resist a smile of amusement which forced itself to my countenance. The prior's quick eye noticed this, and he at once said, earnestly:

"You appear to doubt the truth of what I have told you, my son, but that is only because your heart is not as much given to heavenly things as it should be. There was another miracle performed near this house, far more glorious than that I have just related."

I assured him I did not doubt his belief in what he told me, and that he was no doubt correct in his supposition that my unbelief arose from my heart being different from his own. I added that I took great pleasure in listening to such recitals, and would feel greatly indebted to him if he would relate the circumstance to which he had referred.

The prior seemed pleased by my interest in his stories, and readily complied with my request. For the benefit of the reader

I will repeat his story, as nearly as possible, in his own words:

"The story I am about to relate to you, my son, will, no doubt, seem incredible to you, and indeed I shall not be surprised if you disbelieve it altogether. It is not natural, you will remember, it is a miracle. It would be utterly impossible for man to perform such acts, but with God nothing is impossible. Remember this, and you will have but little difficulty in dispelling your doubts.

"About five hundred years ago, when our order was large and powerful, and when this monastery was at the height of its glory, there lived a monk, a member of our order, who was famed for his great piety. He was regarded as a perfect model of chastity and holiness, and all the brothers strove to be like him. But alas, my son, the judgment of man is not always just, and the best of us may in an instant fall from our high state into the grossest sin. More than this, the better a man grows, and the more highly he is praised, the more powerfully does the devil attack him, and seek to lead him into temptation. So it was with Brother Sebastian, for such was the name of the monk. The evil one knew with what reverence the good man was regarded by the brethren, and he determined to tempt him, hoping by leading him into sin to destroy the force of his example, and weaken the hopes of those who sought to be like him. Accordingly the devil kept a strict watch over him, and sought by every means in his power to lead the monk astray. For a long time Brother Sebastian resisted manfully, but at last was conquered. It happened in this way:

"One day the monk was employed in the church, attending to some improvement that was being made, when he chanced to spy a marvellously fine-looking woman kneeling near him. He was so much pleased with her beauty that he could not keep from looking at her. After a while she glanced up at him, and their eyes met. She blushed, and he felt a curious yet not unpleasant sensation about his heart. She remained in the church for a long time, and while there bestowed upon the monk many bewitching glances, which were not lost upon Brother Sebastian. When she left the church the good brother followed her to the door, and watched her until she was out of sight. Frequently, as she walked

along, she would turn and bestow upon him a smile. Brother Sebastian was a good man, and he tried hard to do his duty, but the temptation was more than he could resist. He at once conceived a violent passion for the fair dame, and would know no rest until he had gratified it. Of course this was very wrong in one who had led such a holy life, but the brother was only a man, and, like all of us, not proof against temptation. He knew he was doing wrong, but he could not help it. He was in the hands of the devil, and he was powerless to resist. Instead of thinking of his duty, he thought of the woman he had seen in the church.

"That night he forgot his prayers, and at mass the next morning he was strangely absent and forgetful. The brothers noticed this, but charitably supposed he had been favored with a vision during the night, and were careful not to disturb him. He stationed himself in the church about the same time he had seen the dame on the previous day, hoping she might repeat her visit. To his great joy he soon saw her enter the church, and glance around as she came in, as if expecting to see some one. Brother Sebastian's heart beat fitfully. It was evident that she was looking for him. She had, beyond a doubt, returned to the church for the express purpose of seeing him, and (under the influence of a devil, my son) he determined she should not be disappointed. In an instant after her entrance the fair dame saw him, and made him a low respectful courtesy. Brother Sebastian was greatly embarrassed, but he managed to maintain courage enough to carry out his intentions. Passing quickly down the aisle, he moved by the lady, saying to her in a low voice, as he passed her, 'Daughter, follow me, I would speak with thee.'

"He passed on towards a dark and retired corner of the church, followed by the fair dame, whose features were tinged with a rosier glow than they usually wore. When they were safe from observation Brother Sebastian paused in his walk, and seizing the lady's hand began to tell her of his violent and undying passion for her. He assured her he would die if she did not consent to return his passion, and that he would leave nothing undone to secure her. In vain the lady protested against his saying and doing things so ill befitting his

priestly dignity. Brother Sebastian would hear nothing but a favorable answer. He told her he would plunge into the river and drown himself if she did not return his love. He could not live without her! The lady herself was not much averse to returning the passion of Brother Sebastian (she was also under the influence of the devil, you will perceive, my son), but she feared that the world might make her suffer for it. Brother Sebastian, however, made her so many promises and so effectually quieted her fears, that she consented to allow him an interview that night. She told him he must see her at her house, as she could not meet him elsewhere without fear of discovery. She told him he must pass over a narrow bridge, which lay across the river that runs near here; that there was no other way for him to see her. If he came by the front of the house, he would be seen by the domestics, and that would ruin all. The path which crossed the river at the little footbridge led directly to the gardens of her house, and there she would meet him and conduct him to a place of safety. She gave him a key which she said would unlock the garden gate, and cautioned him to use the utmost secrecy in his movements. Her husband was on a journey to Leon, but there were many domestics about the house, and some of them had orders to watch her. The least indiscretion might ruin them.

"Brother Sebastian, whose passion had made him both brave and prudent, assured her that he feared no danger, and would commit no indiscretion. He then suffered the lady to leave him, first imprinting upon her rosy lips the first kiss he had ever given a woman. During the day the monk was annoyed and impatient. He longed for the night to come, and thought the day would never end. Ah, my son! it came near ending too soon for him. At last the day was ended, and Brother Sebastian began to prepare to fulfil his appointment. When the prior and all the monks were asleep he left the monastery, and hastened towards the house of the fair dame, full of his unholy purpose. When he reached the river he was so absorbed in his thoughts, that he did not notice the insecurity of the bridge, but started to go over it, without paying any attention to his footing. He had scarcely set foot upon the frail structure when he fell over into the river, and was drowned.

"Now, my son," continued the prior, crossing himself devoutly, "comes the strangest part of this recital. Scarcely had the soul of the drowned monk left his body, when it was seized by the devil, who had been lying in wait for it, and hurried off towards hell. In vain the soul pleaded for mercy; the devil only laughed and told it it was too rich a prize to be so lightly relinquished. But the soul was not left alone in its awful situation. The devil had not gone far when an angel met him, and demanded of him the surrender of the soul of Brother Sebastian. The devil refused to comply with this demand, alleging that the soul was his lawful prize, and that the angel had no right to interfere with him.

"Let us argue that question?" said the angel.

"To this the devil consented, and they sat down with the soul between them, and began to dispute very learnedly about the right of the evil one to the soul of the drowned monk. The devil argued with great cleverness, and the angel had to be continually on his guard to prevent being worsted in the dispute. The devil contended that the monk had fallen into the trap he had laid for him, and had therefore forfeited all claim to the mercy of Heaven. The angel, on the other hand, affirmed that, as the monk had always lived a holy life, and had not really committed the sin he had in contemplation, the devil had really no just claim upon him.

"Thou dost me wrong," said the devil, "in seeking to deprive me of the soul I am carrying; dost thou not know that every soul taken in sin is mine? This was in a wicked way, and in a wicked way I have seized it. Now the Scripture itself says, *'As I find thee, so will I judge thee.'*" This monk I found in evil, of which the business he was about is a sufficient proof, and there needs no other."

"Hold thy peace!" exclaimed the angel; "it shall not be so. The monk led a good life in his monastery; he conducted himself well and faithfully; and no one ever saw ill of him. The Scripture saith that which is reasonable and right, *'Every good work shall be rewarded, and every evil one punished.'*" Then this monk ought to be rewarded for the good we know he has done; but how could that be if he were suffered to be damned? He had not committed any sin when thou didst take and

condemn him. Howbeit, he had left the monastery, and did come to the bridge, he might have turned back if he had not fallen into the river; and he ought not to be so much punished for a sin which he never committed. For his foolish intention only thou condemnest him, and in that thou art wrong. Let the soul alone; and as for the strife betwixt me and thee, let us both go to Duke Fernando, who lives near by, and abide his opinion. Neither side will then have any reason to complain; he will decide honestly and wisely, for false judgment is not to be found in him. To what he says we will both submit, without any further dispute.'

"'I consent to it,' said the devil; 'and let the soul remain between us.' *

"This Duke Fernando, my son, was a powerful noble, whose castle once stood near here. He was famed for his piety and justice, and to him resorted all persons who sought for a just decision of affairs in which they were concerned. Persons even came from other lands to ask his advice. He was a true friend to our order, and to this day we pray for the repose of his soul. His castle was destroyed during a severe war that afflicted this land soon after his death. You will see its ruins as you go on your journey to-morrow.

"To Duke Fernando the devil and the angel repaired, carrying with them the soul. They found him in his chamber awake, and at once laid the case before him. They told him how the monk had left his monastery on an evil errand, and how he had fallen into the river and been drowned, without committing evil, and then asked him to decide which of them should have possession of the soul. All this while the poor soul was trembling violently, and praying to the holy virgin and all the saints to have mercy on him, and deliver him from the power of the evil one.

"The duke did not take long to make up his mind. 'Go immediately,' said he, 'and restore the soul to the body; let him then be placed on the bridge, on the very spot from which he tumbled, and if he advances one foot, nay, ever so little, let Nick go and take him away without hindrance; but if the monk turns back, let him do so unmolested.'

* The prior, in his recital, has made use of the exact language attributed to the angel and the devil, by those who relate this miracle.

"Both the angel and the devil were very well pleased with this decision. The devil chuckled within himself when he heard it, for he believed the monk to be so deeply infatuated, that as soon as he recovered his life again he would put off after the dame as hastily as before. They carried the soul back to the river, and placed it in the body again. Then restoring the monk to life, they set him on the bridge at the precise spot from which he had fallen. As soon as the good brother found himself alive again, he started off and ran for the monastery with all speed. So great was his haste that he did not even stay to bid the devil and the angel good-by, but ran as fast as his legs would carry him. He did not look behind him, but hurried on, fearing each moment that the devil would seize him again, forgetting, in his fright, that the devil has no power over a man's body, and can only seize the soul.

"Upon arriving at the church, Brother Sebastian hid himself in a dark corner, and prayed heartily to be delivered from the power of the enemy. He staid in the corner all night, shivering with cold and fright, and longing for morning to come again. He was completely cured of his folly, and he vowed, over and over again, that, with the help of Heaven, he would lead a better and a worthier life. He saw plainly his own weakness, and he resolved in the future that he would put no confidence in his own piety.

"The next morning the Duke Fernando came to the church to pray, and, as was their custom, all the brothers assembled to meet him, and accompany him to the church. When he had finished his devotions, the duke turned to the prior and asked if Brother Sebastian was among their number. The prior replied he was. The duke then asked to see him. A search was made, but the monk could not be found. At last the prior happened to see him as he sat in his corner, and commanded him to come forth at once and do reverence to the good duke. Abashed and trembling, and with his clothes dripping with water (for he had not had time to dry them), Brother Sebastian presented himself before the group, all of whom, save the duke, wondered to see him in such a plight.

"'Brother,' said the duke, 'what think you now? how came you to be taken? Take care another time when you pass over

the bridge. Tell the prior truly what you saw last night.'

"Brother Sebastian hesitated at first, but being encouraged by the duke, told the prior all that had happened to him—how he had been tempted and had yielded, how the devil had seized him, and how the good Duke Fernando had delivered him—and then declared his willingness to submit to any penance the prior and the duke might see fit to lay upon him, and also his intention to do better in the future. The prior and the monks were utterly astounded at the relation of Brother Sebastian, and were as incredulous as you are now, my son. The duke, however, confirmed all that Brother Sebastian had said, and turning to that monk, told him he owed his life to the holy virgin, who had prompted him to decide as he did, and exhorted all to profit by the miracle, assuring them that their good deeds would not be forgotten in the hour of need.

"The prior declined to lay any penance upon one who had been so signally favored, and all persons present united in singing

praises to the glorious virgin who had interposed in behalf of her servant. Brother Sebastian lived many years after this, and died at last a good and holy man.

"This, my son, is the story of the miracle. To-morrow I will show you the tomb of Brother Sebastian, and also the book in which the miracle is recorded. After such proofs, it will be impossible for you to doubt the truth of the story."

I assured the good old man that I had the highest respect for himself and his order; and to avoid wounding his feelings, told him I would accept the story upon his assurance of its truthfulness. He eagerly vouched for it, and thus the matter ended.

The next morning I was shown by the prior the tomb of the monk, and the book in which he had written his story. After leaving with the good brothers a handsome remuneration for their kindness to me, I bade them adieu, mounted my mule, and continued my journey towards Leon, wondering at the credulity which could make the good prior accept as truth the story he had told me on the previous night.

THE FIRST OF APRIL.

BY ELIZABETH BIGELOW.

DOLLY was dusting the drawing-room, with her pretty soft hair tucked away under a jaunty little sweeping-cap, and her small hands encased in very big old gloves, to protect them from the dust. She had opened the window to let the fresh morning air in, and was leaning out to enjoy it, when her cousin Rob ran down the steps on his way to school. Jane was washing the steps, and as he came down she looked in at the basement window where the cook was standing, and they both tittered. Rob looked up at Dolly with a very red and angry face, and shook his fist at her threateningly.

"Dolly Sanford, you'll get your pay for that yet; you had better believe it!" he said, hotly.

Dolly only laughed; she was not at all frightened by Rob's threats, and then just at that moment Mark Vanderhuyten came by, and drove it all out of her mind. For she was a little dismayed for an instant, that he should see her in a sweeping-cap—Mark Vanderhuyten who was such an exquisite! He would be so shocked to know that she swept and dusted! She felt an impulse to shrink back out of sight, but the sturdy little pride that was in her came to her aid the next moment, and she leaned forth and bade him good-morning with gay nonchalance. As for him, he looked at the cap, and the gloves, and the big duster in her hands, with a little smile, half-surprised half-amused.

"Just like him!" said Dolly, angrily. "Another man might not have noticed at all! And the cap isn't so very unbecoming." This with a glance in the mirror. "Ned Jarvis, now, would have thought it was a new-fashioned breakfast-cap, and complimented me upon it; but Mark Vanderhuyten, I verily believe, knows the fashions for ladies better than I do! How I do detest a dandy!"

And to give emphasis to that last remark Dolly made her duster fly furiously. But for some inexplicable reason, two or three times before her dusting was finished, she went and looked in the mirror, to see just

how badly that cap did look; and Dolly was not a vain girl, either.

So it happened that Rob and his wrongs and threatenings vanished entirely from her mind. But O Dolly, if you could only have known!

Rob's dignity had been very sorely wounded. In all her jokes—and she was continually having them with all her cousins—Dolly had never touched him at so tender a point. "It was the silliest thing and the meanest thing he ever heard of, and everybody in the house, down to his three-year-old brother Dick, knew it;" and in his inmost heart Rob recorded his vow to be revenged. This was Dolly's offence: Rob had nearly completed his sixteenth year without the slightest particle of down having manifested itself upon lip or chin, and his friend Jack Haliburton, who was nineteen, was in the same situation. It was not known that either of them was despondent from this cause, until the day before Dolly had discovered, securely hidden away in Rob's room, a mysterious-looking box whose contents were announced upon the cover "to procure luxuriant whiskers upon the smoothest face," in a miraculously short space of time. The box was evidently new and untouched, and by a strange coincidence Jack Haliburton was invited to spend that night with Rob. Dolly had divulged the secret to Rob's mother, and one of the children had overheard it. Worse than that, she had sent Jane up to the young gentlemen's room with shaving water in the morning!

There was a continual playing of pranks in the house, and Rob was so often the aggressor that all his brothers were delighted with an opportunity to tease him; and his sufferings, taking the children's persecutions and the tittering of the servants together, had not been slight.

So, though the sight of Mark Vanderhuyten drove her little joke entirely out of Dolly's mind, the memory of it by no means departed from Rob's. He, too, had seen Mr. Vanderhuyten, and the sight had suddenly inspired him with a project for a

splendid revenge upon Dolly. But weeks and months went by, and Dolly, if she ever gave a thought to Rob's threats, decided that he must have forgotten all about it.

The first of April—the boys' gala day—came and went, and the usual number of small jokes were perpetrated, but Rob was more quiet and dignified than ever before. "He was growing out of his mischievous ways," his mother remarked, with much gratification; "and Dolly, too, was growing quiet and sensible, and was not putting the boys up to so many tricks as she used to."

The next day Dolly received a letter addressed in Mark Vanderhuyten's handwriting. She knew it at once, because he had several times sent her a note inviting her to go somewhere with him; indeed, he had often done so before he went abroad, for he was distantly connected with the family, and they had been very good friends, as boy and girl. But since he had returned from Europe, and come into possession of his fortune, and grown to be such a lion, altogether, he had rather neglected her. He was always devoting himself to one or the other of the popular belles, and rumor was continually engaging him to this one or that one. He was altogether removed from her humble sphere, Dolly said to herself. Nevertheless, he did call on her quite often, and had once invited her to a concert, but Dolly refused the invitation, without making any excuse. The reason was, as she told her aunt, that "he had grown so conceited that she couldn't endure him." And when her aunt said:

"But you used to like him, Dolly!" she flushed a little, and said, with rather unnecessary vim:

"Well, I just about detest him now, aunty!"

Mark had never repeated his invitation, so it was rather a surprise to Dolly to see his writing on the envelop. But how much more was she surprised when she began to read! It was a *bona fide* love-letter, and just such a one as she would have expected Mark Vanderhuyten to write, though perhaps rather more earnest and impassioned than it had seemed possible for him to be. He had loved her all his life, he said, though until he went away he had not realized that his affection was other than a brotherly one. Now that he had associated with so many brilliant women of the world, he re-

alized how incomparably superior she was, and also how firmly his heart had fixed itself upon her. He knew that he was not worthy of her; but could she not give him a little hope? He could bear waiting if he might be sure of one day calling her his wife.

Dolly read it in the solitude of her own room, with the door securely locked against all intruders—read it over and over again, as if its meaning would never grow plain to her.

When she had read it long enough to commit it to memory she tossed it aside, with a little scornful laugh, and then, for some unaccountable reason, she dropped her head on her hands and indulged in "a good cry."

Mr. Mark Vanderhuyten was in his rooms at the B—House. Very luxurious rooms they were, and the gentleman himself had a very lazy and luxurious air, as he reclined, with his feet at a considerably greater elevation than his head, and a fragrant cigar between his lips. He had been out very late at a succession of receptions the night before, and had only just breakfasted, though it was nearly twelve o'clock. A pile of letters which the postman had brought, hours before, lay untouched upon the table. Suddenly, glancing carelessly at them, Mark caught sight of a smaller envelop than the rest, directed in a lady's hand, and one which he did not recognize. He tore it open, and glanced at the signature—"Dolly Sanford."

"What in the name of all that is wonderful is Dolly Sanford writing to me for?" he ejaculated.

His nonchalant air vanished, and amazement became depicted on his countenance as he read:

"Your letter has surprised me more than I can say. I used to think, in the old times, when we were boy and girl together, that you liked me; of late I have thought you were utterly indifferent to me. I was sorry to believe that, but not so sorry as I am to know that you love me. For I cannot be—I never could be—your wife. I know this will be a disappointment to you, at first, but I cannot help thinking that your feeling for me is only a passing fancy; how can you care so much for such a plain matter-of-fact little body, so unlike your fine friends? I am quite sure that the time will come when you will thank me for say-

ing 'no.' And I shall always be your sincere friend—if you will let me.

"DOLLY SANFORD."

Mr. Mark Vanderhuyten felt like pinching himself to see if he were really Mark Vanderhuyten.

"His letter!—some fool's confoundedly silly joke!" he exclaimed. And then he remembered that it must have been written on "April fool's day," and he wondered that Dolly had not noticed it—poor little Dolly, whose wits had been so scattered by surprise that it had not once occurred to her!

But above and beyond his anger against the perpetrator of the joke, Mark was conscious of a very strong sense of surprise and chagrin.

Dolly Sanford wouldn't have him! Little Dolly Sanford, who had neither beauty nor fortune, whom he had often pitied because she was a dependent in her uncle's family, where her busy feet and willing hands were always at the service of that half dozen of great rough boys. He had never, even in the days when he had had a boyish liking for her, entertained the least idea of marrying Dolly; but that she should object to such an arrangement, thinking he did wish it, was truly an astonishing thing! For Dolly Sanford to reject him, when he was sure that not one of the reigning belles of the season would say him nay!

Dolly was not wrong in regard to Mr. Mark Vanderhuyten's conceit, you see. He was very conceited—a fault not altogether foreign to his sex, in general—but I am obliged to confess that his lady friends were in a great measure responsible for it. He was rich and handsome, had very elegant manners, and could make himself very agreeable—when he chose to do so—and young ladies fluttered about him, and showed that they felt very much flattered by his attention, and mammas were unnecessarily, distressingly polite to him.

Dolly Sanford! Mark could not get her out of his mind; he let his cigar go out, and his horse wait, all saddled, at the door, while he read her letter over and over—almost as many times as she had read his.

"Poor little thing! I should think she would be glad to marry anybody that could take good care of her, and get her away from that place, where they make such a drudge of her. She's a nice womanly little

thing, though; not much like the average society young lady. I suppose she wouldn't marry a fellow unless she really liked him." And Mr. Vanderhuyten heaved a little sigh—for what reason I cannot imagine, unless he felt suddenly that it would be rather nice to be "really liked" by such a girl.

"Uncommonly plain little thing!" he went on, reflectively. "But she has rather taking ways; don't believe they're put on, either. She's fresh and bright like a daisy, too; no powder nor rouge, nor anything of that sort. She looked almost pretty that morning last winter in that horrid cap that would have made a guy of any other woman."

Altogether, larger grew the sum of Dolly's perfections as Mark reflected upon them, and the sting of wounded pride seemed to grow keener in proportion.

She had rejected him, finally and decisively rejected him. To be sure, he didn't want to marry her, he never had proposed to her or thought of doing such a thing, but still it wasn't pleasant to know, for certain, that she wouldn't have him! He mounted his horse, and rode briskly off, trusting to the air and exercise to get "all that nonsense out of his head." But, strange to say, he came back still thinking of Dolly Sanford, and in a frame of mind which showed that there was something of common sense and manliness beneath his conceit, for this is what he said to himself, as he sprang from his horse:

"I don't know why in the world I should suppose that she *would* marry me! I'm a confounded coxcomb, and that's the truth!"

Two or three weeks later he met Dolly at a party. It was the first time he had seen her since he received the letter in which she declined the honor of his hand. Had she discovered that she had been the victim of a joke? he wondered.

One glance at her face, as she greeted him, told him that she had not. She was frank and friendly, as always, though with the faintest shade of constraint, and, he fancied, a trace of pity for him in her face.

He had opportunity for only a word of greeting, for Dolly, if she was not a belle, was not without her attractions, and tonight had quite a little court of her own about her, foremost in which was Mr. Ned Jarvis, a young gentleman for whom Mark had no great liking. On this occasion he assumed an air of proprietorship over Dolly

which was exceedingly aggravating to Mark for some reason, which he did not himself quite understand.

He was gloomy and absent-minded, to the intense dissatisfaction of Miss Laura Fanshawe, a brilliant belle to whom he had devoted himself of late. That young lady noticed that his eyes wandered very frequently in Dolly's direction, and remarked, at last—with a gleam in her own that Mark did not see—; "Mr. Jarvis seems determined to entirely monopolize Miss Sanford, already. And she never had so many admirers. I believe it always makes an object attractive to you gentlemen to know that it is out of your reach."

"I don't understand you," said Mark, bluntly. "Do you mean to imply that Mr. Jarvis has a right to monopolize Miss Sanford?"

"O, don't speak so loud, please! I am not sure that it is public yet, but I have been told on very good authority, that they are engaged."

Mark tugged fiercely at his mustache, and stalked away, with scarcely a word of apology.

Engaged to Ned Jarvis! Well, why not? Ned was respectable, well-connected, had plenty of money. Of course it would be an excellent thing for her. He would have been glad to hear of it, a month ago, Mark said to himself, and wondered what had changed him so. He would shake off this ridiculous feeling, and congratulate her frankly as he ought to do!

But it was not so easy to find an opportunity to do that. She evidently preferred to avoid him. But at last, late in the evening, he succeeded in securing her hand for a dance, and afterwards in leading her into a deserted nook of the library, to rest. Dolly was a little shy and constrained, when she found herself alone with him.

"I suppose I may be allowed to congratulate you?" he said, abruptly.

"Congratulate me?" said Dolly, interrogatively, with innocent eyes.

"Perhaps it is a secret—but I have just been told that you were engaged to Ned Jarvis."

"Who could have told you that? Engaged to Mr. Jarvis! No, indeed!" said Dolly, with her cheeks in a flame.

And then—he never quite knew how, he surely had not meant to do it—Mark found himself pouring forth the story of his love, in the most impassioned manner, and even

forgetting, himself, that he was not the author of the letter!

And Dolly listened with a feeling—of which she had been more than half conscious before—struggling fiercely with what she called her "reason" and her "pride."

"I can't take that no for my answer, Dolly! You must—you will give me a better one, dear!" he pleaded.

"I can't—I don't quite know—you must give me time to think! perhaps another time," stammered poor Dolly, wanting to yield and determined not to.

And just then, to her great relief, Ned Jarvis appeared to claim her for a promised dance. And Mark saw her no more that night.

Dolly was dusting, again, the next morning. She was not exactly a "drudge," but she had a certain round of duties that must be gone through with, even though the night had brought more "counsel" than sleep, and "reason" had been utterly vanquished by love. The morning's post had brought her another fervent appeal from Mark, and Dolly had resolved that her lips should no longer say nay, while her heart said yes. She was dusting Rob's room, and trying to bring order out of the inevitable schoolboy chaos. Some loose sheets of paper had slipped down behind Rob's writing-desk. Dolly glanced carelessly at the scribbling on them, as she picked them up—carelessly, and then attentively, with a fast beating heart.

It was evidently an attempt to copy somebody's handwriting; certain letters were made over and over again; in the first of them Dolly recognized Rob's hand, at once, but, by-and-by, they began to look astonishingly like Mark's! Then she came to a note of invitation which Mark had long ago written to her, and which had evidently served for a copy; and, finally—poor Dolly! it seemed as if a cold, cold hand were clutching her heart, as she looked—a letter which was the exact fac-simile of the one she had received, except for certain erasures and repetitions where the letters had not seemed to satisfactorily imitate the copy!

When Rob came home from school Dolly met him at the door, with a face so white and set that he asked at once if she had seen a ghost. Dolly held the papers out to him.

"Rob, did you do that?—did you write that letter to me, and sign Mark Vanderhuyten's name?" she said, as if imploring him to deny it.

"Why, yes, of course. You weren't green enough to believe it? I didn't really think you would be. Did you answer it? Wasn't it as good a joke as ever you played on me, old lady? and didn't I tell you I'd pay you?"

A look in Dolly's face stopped him.

"But, I say, Dol, I'm sorry if it got you into trouble, you know! I thought you'd find out that 'twas a joke—you might have known by the date!"

But Dolly was out of hearing. She had rushed up to her room, and thrown herself on the bed, in a passion of weeping. It seemed to her that the humiliation was too bitter to be borne. And how noble, how chivalrous he had been! How great a sacrifice he had been willing to make to save her from the sting of wounded pride!

An hour later, moved by a sudden determination, Dolly went down stairs, and announced to her aunt her intention of going, at once, up into the country to her Uncle John's, to spend the summer. It had been arranged that she should go in June, and this was only a month earlier, and after a long argument she succeeded in convincing her aunt that there was a reason—though a secret one—for her sudden freak, and she was allowed to go. Perhaps Dolly's entreaty that Mark Vanderhuyten should, on no account, be allowed to discover her whereabouts enlightened her aunt a little as to the cause of Dolly's sudden flight.

Before she went—on that very night—Dolly wrote Mark a little note, telling him of her discovery, giving a cold and final "no" as her answer to his proposal, and forbidding his seeking her again.

Ah, that was a long summer to Dolly! The country had lost its charm. There was no delight in the clear fresh air, nor the woods, nor the shady country roads. Life was a hard and dreary thing, she felt.

It was October, and her uncle's family were settled in town again, before she went back. Among the bits of news in her last

letter from her aunt had been this item: "You will be surprised to hear that Mark Vanderhuyten has lost all his money. I don't know exactly how, but by unfortunate speculations, I think. He bears it in a very manly and brave way—you know I always told you that there was a great deal more of him than you seemed to think—and has taken a position as clerk in his uncle's store. He looked a little down-hearted, but not so much so as he did *just after you went away*. I think he really liked you, Dolly, and you were a very foolish girl; however, as it has turned out, it was all for the best."

"All for the best" because he was poor! Dolly said that over to herself with a thrill of indignation, while the cars were whirling her rapidly homeward. But what if her aunt were right, in one thing, and he had "really liked" her, after all?

"And I should be a better wife for a poor man than Laura Fanshawe, or any of them!" she said to herself, exultantly. But he did not come to see her. She had been at home a week before she saw him. Then she met him in the street, and he turned and walked home with her. They talked of commonplace matters, like ordinary acquaintances, until, just before they reached the door, he said in his old abrupt way:

"Dolly, if you ran away from me because you thought I didn't love you, you made a very great mistake. I should have found out very soon that you were the only woman in the world to me, if that letter hadn't helped me to it. You will surely believe me, now that I am too poor to have any right to ask any woman to marry me."

Dolly hesitated, with a deep flush, and down-dropped eyes.

"But—but—didn't you know? Uncle Julius died last spring, in California, and left me twenty thousand dollars—" And then Dolly thought she had said enough. And I think that I have.

THE GREAT HORSESHOE.

BY C. A. STEPHENS.

I HAVE my doubts about this story's being fit for the most of youngsters to read. It's a rather tricky tale, at best, and involves a practical joke—a thing not to be encouraged by any manner of means. But as the joke in this case was perpetrated without malice, or any forethought to what it would lead, it may come in for the editor's mercy under the head of thoughtless mischief. I commit it to his conscience on these grounds, with the expectation that it may prove a warning to all boys apt to err in this direction.

About a mile out of the village of Y., and in a small cleared plat in "the pine woods," there was standing, not ten years ago, a rough shanty, which had been recently used as a blacksmith's shop. (Y., as I came near forgetting to state, is situated 3058 miles from the earth's central atom, and in plain sight of the Polaris all night long.)

This shanty, together with anvil, forge, slings, etc., had been the property of one Jared Smith—a Smith by name, and a smith by trade. Though fully half a mile from neighbors, it was on a "main road" between Y. and an adjoining town, and offered some passing custom.

Who Smith was, or where he came from, nobody knew; but he came, built the shanty, and for several years worked at his trade there in the woods. And what is of still greater importance to my story, nobody knew where he went to.

He went off so mysteriously that it was feared some ill chance had befallen him. Inquiries were made, and even the woods about the shop were searched, without results.

He had seemed a singular man, from which many inferred that he was a bad man, and went on to hint that the Old Boy himself had taken Smith off. It was a community of about that way of thinking.

A year passed, but no Smith had made his appearance. The writer was then at school at the little run-down academy at Y., a boy of thirteen, or thereabouts.

Saturday holidays we academy boys used to tramp about the village, fish in the pond above, or gun in the pine woods. And it

happened one afternoon that three or four of us came out near the old shanty, and, as a matter of course, went in to explore and knock about a little. Everything lay round just as Smith had left it—when Old Nick called for him.

The slings looked as shiny as when the last ox was slung up. Bits of hoof-parings lay about the dingy floor. And there sat the dinted old anvil with its sharp nose, and under the bellows was an old bushel basket half full of charcoal.

'Twas a rare opportunity to try a hand at blacksmithing; and, boylike, after tinkering round a while, we lighted some paper with a stray packet-pocket match, and laying on bits of the charcoal, began to puff with the bellows. It burned up very fierce and bright.

There were several short bars of iron on the forge, such as smiths use for stirring their fire. First we heated the ends of these red hot, then hammered them on the anvil with the heavy hammer, and watched the red sparks fly off. Three or four longer bars lay across the beams overhead—one for nails, another for horseshoes, and a third much larger had been used all save about four feet of it.

"Wonder what the old fellow made out of that?" exclaimed Ott (Orrington) Melton.

He had climbed up on the slings, and was turning over the bars. This shorter one came clanging down.

"Crowbars, perhaps," said Diz Davis. "Tell ye what, fellows," he went on, picking up a bit of a smaller bar. "Let's make a horseshoe. They say that it's quite a trick to make a finish one."

Any one can imagine about how our first horseshoes looked! We were not discouraged, however. One thing, it was sort of fun to be hammering on our own hook off there in the woods.

Air-castles rose in our minds, the substance of which was to learn ourselves to "blacksmith," and so make lots of spending money by shoeing horses there in the old shanty—Saturdays.

"But how are we to let folks know about it, so they'll come to us?" said Ott.

"O, we must have up a sign," said I.

"That's so!" exclaimed Diz. "A big horseshoe—that's what blacksmiths have for a sign. I've seen 'em in the city. A big one, with the nails sticking out of it."

"But where shall we get it?" said I.

"Get it? why, make it. Must be a sample of our work."

"Might make it out of that big piece," suggested Ott, pointing to the large bar on the floor.

"Just the thing!" exclaimed Diz, raising it. "That'll make a stunner—if we can only bend it up."

To do this we put on a good supply of fresh coal, and puffed away vigorously; then holding the bar midway across the glowing coal, soon had it red as the flame. It took a deal of hard hammering to bend it. Night came on before we had got it shaped right, and we were obliged to defer the completion of our shoe till the next Saturday.

Some of our readers may think that we were much more anxious to get our sign up than to perfect ourselves in our trade. There's no doubt of it. It's a characteristic of all Yankee artisans, also of our doctors and lawyers, that they first hang out their sign, then learn the trade from their public practice. Saves time, otherwise lost in apprenticeship.

All through the week we doted on our project; and several times after school at night ran out to take a look at our "sign." Nobody thought of going near the old shop in those days; our programme was not interrupted.

The next Saturday found us hard at work at an early hour. After getting the right bend on it, we next proceeded to turn down the heel-corks, then to flatten out the toe and make the toe-cork. This was rather difficult, but nothing to the job we had punching the holes for the nails; all the greater, that the charcoal basket began to get low, requiring the utmost economy in fuel. But by a diligent use of the punch we finally got in the right number of holes—as compared with an old shoe we found on the floor—and by four o'clock had it done.

"There 'tis," said Ott, throwing down the punch.

We surveyed it in silence. It wasn't exactly a success, but then, it wasn't quite a failure. As nearly as I can recollect, it was about twenty inches long, by eighteen at

its greatest width. Its weight, I presume, must have been at least fifteen pounds.

"Should like to had it looked a little better," remarked Diz. "Guess 'twill do, though."

"There's nothing to make another of," reminded Ott.

"And the coal's out," said I.

"Well, then, the next thing is to hang her up," said Diz. "Ought to have it on a pole running from the gable out toward the road."

Ott carried it out to the door, and threw it down on the sand outside, while we searched for a suitable pole. A stake from the fence across the road was procured.

Our plan was to nail this to the ridgepole of the shanty, letting one end of it project in front to hang the shoe on. Ott again picked up the big shoe, when Diz exclaimed: "Hokey! what a track!"

There, in the soft dirt before the door, was the prodigious imprint! It struck us as so irresistibly comical that we dropped both stake and shoe, and fairly doubled up with laughter. There was something so ludicrously huge and Cyclopean about it, that it somehow tickled us prodigiously.

"What would folks think to see such tracks in the road?" exclaimed Diz. "Bet ye 'twould make their eyes stick out!"

"Let's make some with it," suggested Ott. "All along in front of here."

There was just mischief enough in the idea to make it spicy.

We ran in to the forge, and bringing out the iron rods we had stirred the fire with, thrust the ends into the nail holes of the shoe on each side. By bending them over a little, we could take it up by them. Diz took hold on one side, I on the other.

First we tracked the sand in front of the shop. Then, going into the road, began to stamp them down in couples about two rods apart, Ott going ahead to pace it off.

"Make it look as if a horse correspondin' to the track had gone along," said he. "Stamp 'em down hard."

In this way we went along, nearly a hundred rods, to where the road begins to skirt the pond. Here we turned off to the water, and after a few stamps into the sand on the shore, carried our shoe back to the shop.

This operation had taken till nearly dusk in all; and as we had no nails to nail on the pole, we agreed to leave our shoe in the shop, till the next Saturday before mounting it.

"No use to have our sign up till we are ready to go to work," reasoned Diz; and with this sage reflection we went home.

The next day was Sunday; and at the appointed hour we repaired to the little white meeting-house, according to our school regulation; the Academy being under the control of the Orthodox church.

Among the villagers the custom was to repair to the church and so stand, or sit, on the long plank steps in front till the minister came.

It was here that the gossip and the news—what there was—circulated. But we noticed this morning that the waiting congregation were all gathering about two or three who were talking rapidly—describing something.

"Where did you say they are?" some one demanded, as we came within hearing.

"Right out here in the pine woods," was the reply. "Seemed to come out o' the woods right there by Smith's shop."

"Smith's shop!" echoed everybody.

"Yes sir; tracks all round the shop. From there they come along the road to the pond. The last ones are right on the shore. Shows where he leaped off into the water. Never saw such tracks. Big over as a milk-pail! Went thirty feet to a leap! Suppose he went right through the pond just as if it was a mud puddle!"

Ott and Diz exchanged glances.

"Keep mum!" whispered Diz.

Our guilty looks would undoubtedly have exposed us had anybody been looking at us. As it was, all public attention was riveted on the young men who had recently come along the road past the deserted shop.

Nothing but the arrival of the minister, a very grave and reverend man, prevented the whole congregation starting out to see the tracks. Some of the younger fellows I think did go. But the majority followed the parson in, and settled down to wait till noon.

I didn't dare to look at either Diz or Ott during the service, but sat in great suspense, feeling all the time as if I should burst out laughing. I felt frightened, too, at the proportions our little joke had suddenly assumed—frightened at the thoughts of the consequences that might ensue, and conscious, too, of a prodigious "good thing" at the expense of the villagers.

I remember that when the minister read from the Bible, that—"Satan goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may

devour," it struck me as a rather remarkable coincidence.

As soon as the benediction had been pronounced all the male portion of the congregation, with not a few of the girls and elder women, started along the road toward the old shop. Diz and Ott and I followed behind, scarcely daring to speak, but looking unutterable things at each other.

The sight of at least a hundred persons of both sexes examining those enormous tracks, their looks of wonder and superstitious awe, and their absurd exclamations, altogether produced in me a sensation I shall never forget.

Some were measuring the width and length of the imprint with sticks; others were pacing off the length of the monster's stride. The women stood in little groups eyeing the tracks with a sort of nervous horror.

"Must have been the 'Old Boy' himself on horseback," said one.

"Tremendous horse!" echoed another. "Wonder if he come for old Smith in that way?"

After ogling the tracks a while, the crowd followed along to the old shop.

"He pulled up here, I should say," commented Deacon White, the storekeeper.

"Looking for Smith perhaps," suggested some one. "Stopped to get a shoe set may be," said another.

At this point the deacon pushed open the door. Of course the first thing that met the public eye was the great shoe lying on the floor where we had left it.

We had followed the crowd and expected the shoe would explode the delusion. But it didn't. On the contrary they all stood aghast at the sight of it. There it lay covered with sand, just as we had brought it in from the road; and the water we had got on it out at the pond had rusted it already.

The shop, too, on being opened had an odor of recently burned charcoal. The men looked at each other doubtfully. It was some minutes ere any one ventured in to examine it.

"Must have been done last night," said one, looking at the fresh tracks.

"Forge is warm, too!" cried another, holding his hand to it.

"Brethren," said Deacon White. "It looks as if Old Nick and Smith were riding past here last night and called to get a shoe set—and so left the old one."

There it lay sure enough. No one seemed

inclined to touch it. At last one man took it up gingerly, and holding it off from him, carried it daintily out. At sight of it the women fairly screamed and hurried back toward the meeting-house. The men followed with the shoe.

"I want Parson Ellis to see that," said the deacon.

On the way some one broached the theory that the shoe belonged to his majesty's own cloven hoof, instead of to his horse. But as this did not correspond to the track in the road it was generally rejected.

Parson Ellis stood on the steps waiting for his congregation as they came up—with Apollyon's shoe. "Not to-day, brother," said he solemnly, as the deacon began to explain it. "We wout trouble ourselves about the Devil's old shoes Sunday. Let us rather worship God."

The congregation followed him submissively into the church, leaving the shoe on the steps. And when the reverend man passed out after the sermon he did not even glance at the shoe.

But the deacon was more matter-of-fact and withal more inquisitive; he took the shoe home with him and the next morning hung it up in his store.

For the next month the great horseshoe was the standard topic of talk in the village. People from the adjoining towns and even strangers came to see it.

I particularly remember two gentlemen from the city who were spending their vacation at R., a few miles below Y. They laughed over it vastly; went out to see the old shop, and went over the ground where the tracks had been made. Then coming back to the store they examined the shoe critically, weighed it, measured it, etc.

"It's a trick fast enough," said one. "But what puzzles me is to see any motive

for so singular a prank. Nobody about here would have wit enough to plan and carry out so big a joke. Must have taken quite a head-piece to get up such a sell, you see. I'm inclined to think some strangers—fellows from town—did it to mystify the villagers."

"Look at it as you may, it's a very droll, unaccountable piece of mischief," concluded the other, laughing. "Something about it we haven't got at yet; depend upon it."

And so they rode off. For the honor of Parson Ellis, I must add that though he had for thirty years preached the existence of a personal devil, he still had the good sense to denounce the whole thing as a delusion. Perhaps he considered the idea of Satan on horseback as heretical.

But nothing could really deceive many of the villagers. One reason for this was that nobody could satisfactorily account for the presence of the shoe—save upon Deacon White's original hypothesis.

The excitement died out after a while, of course—after everything had been said about it that could be. But it was not forgotten. The old shop was more shunned than ever. The road past it and along the pond-shore wasn't much haunted by solitary pedestrians after dusk.

As for Diz, Ott and I, we kept mum. After what had passed we knew better than to proclaim our joke.

The horseshoe was only mentioned when in our rooms and under our breath. The blacksmithing scheme was quietly abandoned.

Early the next spring we all three left the academy to attend the L. Institute; and so far as I know this is the first time the story has ever been told. It was more of a blunder than a practical joke, as I said at the outset.

THE HIDDEN HOUSE.

BY MAY HAMILTON.

I.

A GROUP of young people were gathered on the piazza of one of the great hotels at a favorite summer resort—no matter just where—a gay trio, however, laughing, chatting, jesting by turns, Belle Fairfax's clear ringing voice sounding above the others, in such roundelays of glee, that her stately brother, standing apart and watching her with indulgent gravity, declared she might be heard half a mile at sea.

"A declaration too utterly devoid of truth to frighten me in the least," answered the girl, as mad with merriment as a June robin; and a laugh, loud, clear and shrill, yet sweet as a bugle-note, burst from her red lips, and broke into ripples and echoes of melody on the still air, till even grave dignified Doctor Paul Fairfax caught the infection, and laughed like a schoolboy.

"I doubt if any declaration a man might make, however fervent and truthful, could move Miss Belle to any feeling deeper than mirth," said a tall bearded man, in an elegant undress uniform, just behind her chair.

Belle tossed her head, a childish way she had of expressing pique, which her brother was forever ridiculing as brusk and inelegant, totally unbecoming, indeed, in a young lady in society. But Belle, though a beauty and an heiress, was a spoiled child still.

"I cannot see the justice of your accusation, Major Cranston," she said, haughtily, glancing up to read only a vague reproof in his handsome eyes.

Perhaps it did not just suit her that the man she cared most to win was growing to believe her heartless and a flirt. Under her girlish nonsense and high spirits she hid a warm true woman's heart; and though none but the major suspected it, she was feigning a gayety quite unfelt. Going silently over in her own mind the rides, walks, sails and waltzes of the last few days, she could recall at least eleven different escorts, each of them, no doubt, at that very moment secure in the belief that he was the favored man.

"I don't care a straw!" she cried, im-

petuously, with a little scornful curl of her beautiful lip, answering rather her own self-accusation than the grave yet tender reproach in her lover's eyes; "one can't be young forever, and I do so hate your quiet, proper, conventional people! They ought to go to heaven at once, and stay there—unless they are like my friend Maud Algernon," she added, lowering her voice suddenly, as her brother came quietly along and laid a hand warningly on her shoulder.

Just in time. A rustle of soft drapery, a wafting of tuberoses perfume, and a girl, exquisitely dressed in some lustrous black material through which snowy arms and shoulders gleamed like ivory, stepped through the doorway and dropped quietly into the chair, a rustic seat of gnarled boughs, that Doctor Fairfax had set forward for her beside his sister.

"I must certainly have missed the sunset but for your voices. You can't imagine how suddenly Belle's laugh broke my dream in fragments. I hope the laughing-gas is not quite exhausted, although Miss Fairfax certainly got more than her share." And she spread her spangled fan as she spoke, bowing to Major Cranston, who had left Belle's side at her approach, and stood leaning over the balcony railing.

"Miss Fairfax has been feigning unwonted merriment merely to hide her vexation at having refused only eleven offers this week, when one more would have made up an even dozen," answered he, a flicker of mischief glimmering in his blue eyes that angered Belle more than she would have cared to show.

Miss Algernon glanced from one to the other, wondering if it really was just a playful war of words, but gathered nothing except a suspicion that the major's home-thrust had struck deeper, even, than he had meant; though he stood coolly selecting a cigar with the air of a man at peace with himself and all the world.

Maud, with unfailing tact, bethought herself to turn the conversation into smoother channels. Perhaps, too, she pitied Belle, who sat very silent, with flushed forehead, playing with her watchchain.

"I fancied I heard my name as I came through the hall. Who was so kind as to think of me, or wish for me, perhaps?" she asked. "It was you, Belle, of course; what were you saying?"

"Nothing worthy of note, probably. If I may venture to believe my friends, it is quite impossible for me either to talk or act with propriety," answered Belle, shortly.

"Ah, I am unspeakably relieved. I really feared some one might have ventured to traduce me—saying perhaps I was the laziest creature living to sleep from dinner until sunset. But with the band playing that exquisite waltz, floating in at my window on every breeze, and the ocean murmuring in undertone, who would not sleep and dream?" said Maud, shutting her great violet eyes till the lashes swept her soft oval cheek.

Paul spoke then, softly, and with a look in his face few women ever brought to light.

"My little sister, in her attempt at defending herself against such very superior forces as Major Cranston and myself, was only saying that it was morally impossible for such a hoyden as herself ever to attain the unruffled repose of manner so winning in her friend." And the doctor bent his head in playful gravity.

It was of course Miss Algernon's turn to blush then, which she did so charmingly, that Paul set himself to wondering, for the fiftieth time, if he had lived his thirty invulnerable years to get madly in love, at last, with a woman whose only passport to society, aside from her subtle charms of face and manner, was the fact of her being Belle Fairfax's intimate friend.

Belle's frolic was evidently at an end for that afternoon.

"Paul is very absurd," she said, hotly. "I do assure you, Maud, he is not often so disagreeable. Perhaps if he, and some others I could mention, did not persist in hanging propriety forever over my head like the sword of Damocles, I might, in time, develop into something better than a hoyden or a flirt."

"Nobody questions your capacities, my dear," said a new-comer on the scene—Aunt Olive Fairfax—who had dressed with her usual care after her well-beloved afternoon nap, and had come to hunt up her young people.

"Nobody doubts my capacities," repeated Belle; "nobody believes in them, you

should say, auntie. Even Paul, my last resort, scolds me continually. I believe I shall enter a convent, like the little girl who picked her doll in pieces and found it stuffed with sawdust." And she wound her arm round Maud's waist and leaned her head on her shoulder.

Paul laughed lightly at her serious face, but Cranston was busily engaged in sending out tiny whiffs of smoke from his fragrant Havana, and watching them circle above his head.

"What perverse mood has taken you all in hand? We are all in search of enjoyment, and one would suppose you children might find some better employment than quarrelling. Don't you remember, Belle, the text last Sunday—'Love one another?'" And Aunt Olive, with the calm satisfaction of having done her duty, turned to go down stairs, the girls following, laughing softly to themselves.

Knots of people, young, old and middle-aged, were scattered through the long parlor. Dell Tracy, a handsome showy girl, in lavender silk and plenty of jewels, beckoned to Belle and her friend, who crossed the room and joined the group at a little marble table, on which stood, hovering over an unsoiled sheet of paper, provoking, mysterious, spider-like *Planchette*.

"Such fun as we have had!" exclaimed vivacious Miss Tracy, who, by the way, was overfond of "fun." "That old maid, the minister in the blue glasses talks with so much, came along a few moments ago, and we coaxed her to ask a question, and I ran *Planchette* over the paper and wrote out, 'No indeed! You are thirty-five and over; never had an offer, and never will.'"

"Miss Tracy! how could you?" Maud exclaimed, reprovingly, while even Belle kept sober. "Nothing can excuse us for willfully, or even thoughtlessly, wounding the feelings of another."

Maud stood with a hand on the mischievous little story-teller as she spoke. Dell Tracy winced a little at her gentle reprimand, and was just going to own that she had felt a little pang of remorse at her cruelty, when the old maid, who was, no doubt, worth fifty of her, had turned away, grieved and confused, with slow tears gathering on her short eyelashes. But just at that moment somebody beckoned Miss Dell to the other side of the room, and Maud said, softly, as they stood now alone:

"See, Belle, the creature is moving under my hand; she always writes clearly and rapidly at my touch. Propose a question, and we may have, perhaps, some legitimate fun before that horrid girl comes back; or, at least, blast no one's hopes but our own."

"Go on!" cried Belle, catching the spirit of her friend's mood. "My question is a mental one. Now, fate, be kind."

"Reconciliation to-night," wrote the tiny wizard in a trice.

Maud laughed.

"You asked how your tiff with a certain candidate for military favor is to end; remember, dear Belle, that 'Peace hath her victories more renowned than war.'"

There was, of course, nothing for Belle but to laugh too, and own up, which she did.

Another hand, white and shapely, with a diamond gleaming on the little finger as a late sunbeam struck it, closed over Maud's just here. The girls started guiltily, and Belle drew a sigh of relief.

"Only you, Paul? How you frightened me! I thought it was—that is, I was afraid—"

"That the major was playing eavesdropper? Ah no! he is superior to temptations to which I yield without a struggle. He is chewing his cigar end still, I dare say. But see, this wonderful little French fortune-teller has something at her finger-ends."

Planchette was moving again. But Maud did not care now. The late twilight was deepening and glooming in the little alcove where they stood; the wave-music came murmuring up from the beach, and odorless balms blew in at the window from the scented air of the damp sweet July evening. Thrill after thrill of sensation new and exquisite went through her veins as Paul Fairfax's hand closed on her little nervous fingers, and hardly caring whether any one saw or not, so golden was the opportunity, his other hand slid softly around her waist and pressed against her beating heart. Incomparable Belle, to stand in such rapt admiration before a chromo at the other end of the saloon!

"Now for the revelation; let us hope it promises paradise to those who endure to the end," said the low voice of Paul, as some people neared them.

They read together, with bent heads peering at the scrawling, barely legible

characters. After the first sentence, Miss Algernon stopped short, with a little gasping cry; but Doctor Fairfax read aloud:

"Your enemy lives, and is near you. You are mistaken in supposing that you murdered him. Do not venture out alone for three days."

For a moment he thought Maud was going to faint. A pale terror settled on her rigid face, and crept in dark shadows round her mouth and under her beautiful eyes. Paul drew her through an open door out into the dusky hall.

"Do not, I pray you, let this absurd foolery affect you so painfully. Were you more familiar with that vile little infernal machine, you would know it capable of the most impossible and ridiculous lies." And he chafed the limp cold hands in his, and in his lover-like eagerness to comfort her, pressed them to his lips, and caressed the icy fingers with his silky brown mustache.

Miss Algernon tried to speak, but the words choked her. A new idea struck her companion suddenly, and he said:

"Let me entreat you to forget this folly, Miss Algernon. We were writing together, and it is more likely the message was to me than to you. Remember I am a physician; and who knows but I have sometime in the past murdered some luckless but confiding patient? Let us accept this most reasonable view of an unreasonable theory."

The ghost of a smile overspread Maud's face, but he could not urge her into the parlor again. She said good-night to him, and went up to her room, while he, not just in company mood, hunted up his hat and strolled away down the beach glittering like silver beside the moonlit sea.

"To think I should go about it so awkwardly and distress her so," he scolded away to himself. "I only wished to put her on her guard, and to let her know that rascal did not die at her hands, though I almost wish he had. He will certainly waylay her if she ventures out alone. He intends, of course, to use her insane attempt on his life—though I am ready to swear she was at that time entirely irresponsible—as a means of extorting money from her. Heaven pity her! If ever I saw a cruel purpose in any human face, as he stood discussing plans with his companion, I saw it in his."

Belle queued it royally among her admirers that night at the "hop." Neither

Doctor Fairfax nor Miss Algernon appeared in the lighted ballroom. To be sure, the major was there, not, as usual, her most devoted, but chatting gracefully with middle-aged ladies and the wall-flowers, quite oblivious the while to the witchery of the most delicious of Strauss's waltzes. But even pleasure may weary one, and toward midnight it occurred to Belle that her head ached and that she was tired. So she stole away into a little room full of flowers at the end of the hall, and sat down among some blossom-laden oleanders.

Leaning a sober little face in her hands, she thought it all over, the day's pleasure, the evening revel—one voice, one only—echoed in her ear, piercing her with sharp pain. "No feeling deeper than mirth. Ah, if he only knew!" she sighed, softly.

Then two very gentle hands, whose familiar caressing touch warmed her like wine, drew her head back till it rested on a broad strong bosom. She was crying a little feminine tempest, but the major kissed away the tears with murmured endearments.

"I was a very great blockhead to wound you so, my precious little darling; you who are so infinitely superior to me in everything. Try and forgive me, dearest. And I hope sincerely I may be court-martialled if ever I am jealous again."

So Belle forgave, of course, and laid down that night with her flushed cheek yet warm with his kisses and his ring on her finger. But Maud stood like a ghost in the full moonlight, with a face white as her dainty nightdress. There was no rest for her. She drew a thick cashmere wrapper around her chilly shoulders, and crossed the unlighted passage to her friend's room, feeling that she should die of nervous terror if she remained alone, with the shadow that had darkened her life for five long years flapping its gloomy wings over the security and rest that promised yet to brighten into happiness.

"Why, Maud dear, how you frightened me! I was sound asleep when you rapped. Come in, you night-blooming cereus," said Belle, as she drew her in and turned the key in the door.

Maud sat down in a deep-cushioned chair with an utterly weary, almost despairing, movement that went straight to Belle's tender little heart.

"Poor dear, you are sick. I couldn't think why you disappeared so suddenly this

evening, unless Paul coaxed you out on the beach. Have you one of your dreadful headaches?" she asked, pityingly.

"No; but O Belle! such a heartache! And I want to tell you something that I ought to have told you long ago. You are worthy of all love and confidence, and I am going to trust you to the uttermost."

Belle Fairfax settled herself in a gipsy attitude in the middle of the bed, and drew up her little white feet like a sleepy kitten.

"You are not going to tell me that you have let Paul get so in love, just to refuse him. O Maud! Paul never loved any woman before, and remember, he has seen some of the most beautiful women in Europe."

"Your brother has never made love to me, and never will," said Maud, with a touching sadness in her voice. "Belle, I am no young girl. I have been married almost five years."

Belle Fairfax sat very still, with her bright eyes very wide open.

"Tell me all about it. No one else shall know. That, then, is the mystery. I have half suspected it, you are so cold—to every one but Paul," she added, slowly, under her breath. "Ah, Maud, why not have been cold to him as well?"

"Let us speak no more of that. Love is to me forbidden fruit this side of heaven."

"'Tis dust to dust, down here, Lorina,
But there, up there, 'tis heart to heart!"

murmured the sad voice, dreamily. "When we met last summer, Belle, so singularly, perhaps providentially, and I was so fortunate as to be instrumental in saving you, I could have given up my hold on life with few regrets. It is sweet, I know, to be young and beautiful, but fate had been cruel, bitterly so, to me. I do not yet know how your brother succeeded in bringing us both so safely ashore, but I do think I can say truly that I meant, upon recovering from the illness that followed, to tell you enough of my history to enable you to judge whether I was worthy of the confidence and delicate kindness you so generously bestowed. Ah, how cowardly I grew as those potent and genial influences, to which youth is ever awake, lulled me into forgetfulness of the dreadful past!

"I have told you before, I think, that my father was a Frenchman of education, and a teacher of the language in New York.

His own worst enemy, too, as regarded drinking and gaming. My mother, an angel of patience she must have been, had considerable property in her own right, though my father squandered all he could lay hands upon, either by persuasion or strategy. She was wise enough, however, when she came to die, to secure the remnant, about ten thousand dollars, to me, in such a way that I could not make use of it until I was twenty-one; and I bless her for that wise provision every day of my life.

"I had a music teacher, a Frederick Barring, a handsome man in his way, and possessing fascinations, subtle and dangerous, which I cannot even now coolly analyze. When I was about sixteen my parents died, very nearly together, and, in my utter loneliness and helplessness, ignorant alike of myself and the great untried world, I listened to the urgent entreaties of Mr. Barring, and, though fifteen years my senior, I married him.

"There was the mistake which a lifetime of wisdom cannot obliterate! Living on the surface, happy in the very affluence of youth and health, life went smoothly for a year. I had pleasant rooms at good hotels, plenty of pretty clothes, and my cherished birds and flowers. One servant, too, a mulatto woman, and many a time, in the dreadful days that came after, I must have died but for her almost motherly devotion. Ah, Belle, before one year of marriage had flown I knew my fate—the most wretched a woman can know—that of a gambler's wife!

"Throwing off all restraint as he sunk deeper into the vortex, my husband grew coarse, and often abusive. His sweet sonorous voice, which had won upon my foolish heart, was often raised in curses when he found my money safe beyond his reach—thanks to the forethought of my mother. It was in the hands of a crabbed old lawyer, who was true as steel to his charge. He is dead now, though he lived to place my fortune safely in my hands last summer, the day I became of age.

"Well, from my pleasant rooms I changed into cheap lodgings, as my husband grew unfortunate, though the bitterest drop in my cup was, I think, parting with my good black servant, just as I was growing to consider her presence necessary almost to my very life.

"I shall never forget one terrible night

in August, the second summer after my marriage. Good fortune had sent my husband an old debt he never expected to collect—a 'debt of honor,' by the way—and, partly from his own love of luxury and partly in consideration of my very delicate health, we were established for a few weeks at a summer hotel on Rocky Point. I was sitting at my window one evening enjoying the strong salt ocean breeze, and listening to the waves lapping the shore, till the sound made me sleepy with its musical monotone. Rising from my low chair, I was just letting down my hair previous to retiring, when I heard footsteps coming over the stairs, and Mr. Barring came in with a strange man, whom he introduced as an old friend. I caught up my hair and tried to be decently polite, but there was a hard angry feeling at my heart. Even the fact, too evident, that he had been drinking, could not, in my eyes, excuse him for insulting me with the presence of his associate. With a quiet yet stubborn determination that I would never entertain such people, I withdrew into my sleeping-room, though all disposition to sleep was effectually scattered. The sound of a flute, exquisitely played by some one in the next room, struck my ear, and I stepped out of the low outward-opening window and sat down on a light settee in a corner of the balcony. I could hear the voices of my husband and his companion, the clink of glasses, and not unfrequently an oath; and I knew well enough they were drinking and playing cards, and that Mr. Barring was losing money. Still the sweet passionate murmur of the flute went on, like some angel voice, lulling and restful, till, utterly weary, and weak with the languor of approaching maternity, I fell asleep, my head resting on the hard arm of the settee.

"I don't know how long I slept, but a hand on my forehead—O Belle, such a gentle hand!—awoke me, and a voice said in my ear:

"'Dear child, do wake up; you will get your death.'

"I believe I said, fretfully, that it wasn't so easy dying when one wished, but he saw how I shivered with cold, and, gathering closer the thick travelling-shawl he had laid over my dew-wet garments, he said:

"'Sit still just a moment and wait for me.'

"Wait for him—with that voice, that

hand, those grave tender eyes—I could have sat there forever, I thought, scarcely awake.

"He came back in a moment with a goblet half full of some delicious amber-hued wine. He held it to my lips, and I drank it without a word.

"Now perhaps you will not take cold. Remember life is the gift of God, and no night was ever yet so dark that morning did not come. Your husband is asleep, your unwelcome guest is gone. Now go in and go to bed.

"I obeyed as a child might. The room was dark but for a glimmer of moonlight. Cards were strewn on the floor, glasses—some broken, some half filled with liquor, the smell turning me sick—were on the table. And my husband, still dressed, lay across the bed, sleeping the heavy slumber of a drunken man.

"Whether the wine I had taken had upset my reason, or whether grief, pain, bodily weakness and extreme nervous derangement were culminating in temporary insanity I cannot, even now, decide; but I know I was in a dangerous mood, capable of doing desperate deeds. 'How easily and safely,' I thought, 'this unnatural life may be ended forever. Who, in his senses, could blame me for loosing the chain that fetters me to such a living death?'

"Let none but some distracted woman suffering as I had suffered, and tempted beyond her strength as I was tempted in that most horrible hour, sit in judgment upon my confession. A glass of brandy and water stood on a chair by the bedside, and knowing from experience that he had set it there for a convenient draught when he should awake, I seized a vial from the mantel, containing a powerful narcotic, which I had used for toothache, and which was, I knew, in large doses, a deadly poison, and turned its contents into the liquor!

"Dropping the bottle, empty now, by the bedside, and trusting to a verdict of suicide, I passed silently to my little wardrobe, seldom replenished even by needful garments. I selected a waterproof cloak with cape and hood, the most perfect of all disguises, and gathering what jewels I yet possessed, stole, like a spirit, down the carpeted stairs and out of the house forever.

"Three miles of weary travel—imagine it, dear Belle! alone at the deadest hour of night, with no protection save the Eter-

nal Eye—brought me to the railroad station, where I knew an early express train was sure to stop, and by the middle of the next day I was far in the interior of another State.

"You know the nestlike retreat you named 'the hidden house,' dear Belle; you remember the pleasant month you spent there last October, when the forest cast its splendor; need I tell you that the faithful servant and housekeeper, my good black Rose, was the valued friend of my married misery? Can you understand now that the violet-eyed child, so like an angel, with her dainty dimpled limbs and birdlike voice, is not a foundling as Rose told you, but my very own, my darling baby, dear little Daisy?"

Belle was crying tears of ready sympathy, long ere Maud ceased her long recital, and for a few minutes they cried together. Just then a distant church bell struck two, and Maud rose, saying:

"I have excited and distressed you enough for to-night, dear Belle. May Heaven keep you safe and happy, secure from trials like mine. The knowledge has come to me to-night, in a mysterious way, that the husband I so insanely attempted to send into eternity is living still, that he is near me seeking an opportunity for revenge, and O my friend, something stronger than presentiment impresses me that he will search out and obtain possession of my child! But I had rather mourn her as dead. I had rather see her in her coffin!"

"Impossible, Maud; no stranger would ever think of looking in among those giant-like pines to find 'Hidden House!'" said Belle, punching vigorously at her pillows.

"Perhaps not; I will trust to the love and protection of Him aside from whose care a sparrow cannot fall;" answered Maud, twisting up her heavy hair and lying down beside her friend. And in another hour the two were sleeping the unbroken slumber of youth and health, like

"Maud and Madge in their robes of white,
The prettiest nightgowns under the sun;
All alone in the stilly night;
After the revel was done."

II.

PAUL FAIBFAX sat down in his room, in dressing-gown and slippers, enjoying a cigar. He could hear the bathers plashing

among the waves; the screams of the ladies, the yelping of poodle-dogs—see from his window white sails of outward bound ships glimmering like stars in the blue distance. Rather an honest, earnest worker than a man of the world, the young physician, a stranger alike to either illness or ennui, except as they appeared in others, would never have dreamed of leaving his busy routine to laze at the seashore of his own free will. But Belle and Aunt Olive coaxed and would hear no denial, and so, soft-hearted as a baby where women were concerned, he yielded the point in unconditional surrender.

He was not sorry now. Far down in his heart, all unspoiled yet, and away back in memory, there was a face passing fair, a voice pitifully sweet, and a glance mournfully tender, that years could not dispel or dim. And here, beside the sounding sea in golden mornings, along the beach of moonlit evenings, and once, ah, once in the solemn midnight, he had looked in the wistful pausy-blue eyes, and listened to the low bewildering voice.

He puffed away at his half-consumed cigar with eyes closed dreamily, wishing, for the thousandth time, that among other possibilities, it was possible for a man to reason himself out of *love*! "It is of no use—no use," he said, slowly; "it isn't a thing to reason over, there's no reason in it. I loved her that horrid night I found her asleep in the cold, like a bird fallen from the nest, on the piazza at Rocky Point; and I have loved her ever since, and I would marry her, if it were not a crime, even though I knew she would murder me."

A light footstep along the passage broke his reverie, and his sister came in, fresh as the half-blown blush-rose at the throat of her pink morning robe.

"What, not bathing, Belle?" he asked, carelessly.

"Not this morning; at least not in old Atlantic's big bath-tub. I could not leave Maud, who is suffering from one of those dreadful headaches. She received a letter this morning which nearly drove her wild. She has cried herself sick, and it occurred to me that you might fix her up something to calm her down, and make her go to sleep."

Doctor Fairfax rose and went thoughtfully about preparing some tiny white powders with minute directions for their use. Belle sat silently a moment, fingering the small blue papers.

"Paul," she broke out suddenly. "Suppose a person suffering temporary derangement, or in a frenzy of grief or despair, commits a crime; would they, should it come to light, be liable to the extreme penalty of the law?"

"Rather a tough question, my little sister. The law is an intricate and delicate piece of machinery; very lenient to some, hard and cruel to others. I trust, however, you may never get your fingers pinched in it.

"But if the crime was murder, Paul?" pursued the girl, not noticing his attempt at pleasantry.

He was walking up and down the room, now studying the vine-wreaths on the carpet, and, Belle knew, thinking vigorously. He stopped short presently.

"Isabelle!" he said, in a low grave voice, and he never called her so except in moments of deep earnestness; "the man your friend fears can never succeed in proving her guilty of an attempt against his life. His career is not unknown to me, and I can at any moment prove misdeeds against him which would not only divorce his wife, but shut him in a felon's cell for life."

"Then you know all her history—her dreadful troubles?"

"I know enough, more perhaps than you or she would believe. I overheard, here, in the midnight stillness, her painful recital to you last night. Go and say nothing of this. I will care for her welfare as though she too were my cherished sister, and place my life between her and danger."

"Kind good Paul!" she said, caressing his handsome hair.

"One moment, Belle," as she turned to go; "do you know the contents of that letter?"

"Not clearly, but of course it contains some threat. Maud is so entirely upset and unlike herself I hate to question her."

"Well, you need not. Comfort and soothe her all you can, and if it is possible for you to get possession of the letter without her knowledge, bring it to me at once. But remember, on no account let her suspect that I have any interest in or knowledge of her affairs. It would hurt her sensitive pride, and that is not all; I have also strong reasons quite my own."

The doctor's powders must have held some powerful and potent charm. All the long sunny afternoon the wornout girl slept

as calmly as an infant sleeps in its cradle. Belle looked in upon her, every hour or two, stepping cautiously, arranging curtains and bed drapery as the light and oppressive heat dictated. Towards sunset she begged leave of Paul to awaken the sleeper, whose unbroken slumber began to alarm her, but he only said:

"Not for the world. That very sleep may save her a brain fever. She will wake, in good time, calm and refreshed."

So Belle, a little tired, and with a little pity for the patient major, who had neither driven nor sailed for the day, but kept sending up ice-creams and magazines, and now and then a little coaxing note, dressed herself sweetly in a lovely organdie, about six o'clock, and went for a drive on the beach to see the breakers come in, her especial delight.

Doctor Fairfax, too, fairly fagged with the heat of the upper rooms, donned a fresh evening suit and went out, intending to be absent only long enough for half a dozen good sniffs of sea air.

Half a mile or so ahead, along the sandy stretch, a carriage came tearing on like lightning, the horses wild with terror and sudden excitement. Men turned pale, ladies fainted, and every one did everything but the sensible thing. Then a quick crash and the horses foaming and shuddering, dragging slowly the fragment of a vehicle.

Doctor Fairfax and two other physicians who happened to be at hand, found plenty of work for the next two or three hours. There were broken limbs, sprained ankles, compound fractures, and a skull to trepan!

Belle returned about nine in the evening, and was shocked to learn what had occurred. Though she never liked those Tracys, with their loud voices, cheap airs and purple-pride, she was sincerely sorry Dell had broken her arm, and that the old gentleman, the most endurable of them all, was likely to die. So with waiting on Paul, and holding bandages and vials, she did not get time to peep at her friend until very late.

"No doubt she will sleep till morning. Paul said she might," soliloquized Belle, as she stole cautiously in.

She could scarcely credit her senses. The room was deserted, and the bed made, with Maud's own exquisite eye to neatness which no chambermaid could quite suit; every window was wide open, and the lace curtains blowing in and out with the strong

steady puffs of a rising wind. But Maud was gone—the corner where her great travelling trunk had stood, was vacant.

Suddenly, as she stood gazing blankly around, an edge of written paper attracted Belle's attention, peeping out from beneath a heavy ice pitcher on the table. Quickly she drew it out and uttered a little triumphant cry. It was the letter, wet and crumpled, but still legible. Just then she heard her brother come through the passage, enter his room and shut the door. She was beside him in another moment, as he stood winding his watch.

"O Paul! I have found it—the letter—but Maud is gone, no one knows where. She must have intended going without our knowledge, as she seems to have departed quietly during the excitement caused by the accident. Her trunk is gone too, and that leads me to hope she went of her own accord, and was not spirited away."

Paul looked very grave and sadly perplexed. He glanced up at Belle, standing near, pale, heavy-eyed and half crying. At that instant Aunt Olive called from her room:

"Come, Belle, why upon earth don't you go to bed? Paul is crazy to keep you up so late."

"I believe I am. Go, dear, and we will read this wicked letter together to-morrow in the sunshine. I shall have you ill if we are not careful; and then who knows but the major might shoot me?" And he kissed her a tender good-night at her own door.

Then he sat down in a deep-cushioned chair, and read the creased soiled sheet with brows knit angrily. It was short and to the point, reading thus:

"Do you never intend going out, madam? I have hung about for the last ten days, waiting for a secret interview. I am half inclined to think you have been warned against me, cautious as I have been. A great pity, isn't it, that I am not where you meant I should be—six feet underground. Enclose and mail to my address, a check for five thousand dollars, and I will trouble you no more. I am out of health and wish to leave the country. I married you for your money, and your money I will have. Refuse, and I will search out and claim the child you doubtless love. I have seen her once with your old favorite Black Rose. Think how easily a shrewd detective could discover her. If you do not want me to take her forever out of your reach, comply with my terms, and rest secure under the shelter of your maiden name."

"FREDERICK BARRING."

"The horrible villain! I, too, will employ a detective to track and trap him. Distracted with fear for the safety of her child, she has doubtless gone to her 'hidden house.' To-morrow I must get the secret of this hiding-place from Belle." And the doctor went to bed, to think, but not to sleep.

There was an out of the way road, narrow and dusty, running through a piece of woodland on the outskirts of a drowsy country village. A deserted road it was fast becoming, and a rapid and luxuriant growth of sweet-brier, burdock and trailing black-berry vines was threatening, if not entirely to obstruct, to render it at least "very hard to travel." Yet who had, at the time of which I write, the hardihood to follow its winding course for a couple of miles, might have come suddenly upon a delightful turn-off, a charming little shady lane, with bars and patches of sunshine breaking goldenly here and there through the grand old oaks and sombre pines, where the sweet wild birds trilled their matin and evening songs.

A house, too, at the end of the lane, hardly larger than a respectable-sized bird's-nest, that would set one wondering how in the world a house could ever be built so small. Flowers, too, just a handful of such as will grow without much care, larkspurs, phlox, and great blood-red roses, and by-and-by, toward fall, gay nasturtiums and snowy petunias.

At the low west window, with a book upon her lap, but dreaming rather than reading, Maud Algernon sat in the cool shadow of the closed blinds. A lovely child, wonderfully like her, with the same purple-blue eyes and creamy softness of complexion, played at her feet with bright-hued pictures and a flaxen-haired doll.

For many weeks the terror that had brought Maud so hurriedly to the hidden house, kept her in an ecstasy of nervous watchfulness, but summer was waning and no real danger seemed at hand. The tiny place was no unpleasant abode; Maud herself had furnished it with many elegant articles of use and comfort. There was a tasteful carpet on the floor of the little parlor, and a carved bookcase well filled, gay afghans on the chairs, and hanging flower-baskets in the windows. Black Rose, a host in herself as regarded capabilities, went

two or three times a week to town for needful articles, while an aged farmer and his wife, their only neighbors, too deaf and infirm to be inquisitive, supplied them with fresh milk, eggs, poultry, and the sweetest butter that ever was churned.

One lazy golden October day, when the air was murmurous with humming insects, and full of odors from the resinous pines—a day in short when simply to exist was pleasure—Maud yielded to the persuasions of Black Rose, and the wistful eyes of little Daisy, and, tying on a broad shade hat, took the child out a little distance from the house, where the soft crisp moss was strawn with pretty cones and bright-hued leaves, which the child gathered delightfully in a tiny basket, cooing softly all the while her sweet half intelligible baby talk so fascinating to a mother's ears.

"Mamma's darling is very happy to-day; as happy as if there was not such a thing as danger and wickedness in the world. Well, go on gathering your pretty toys, my pet. Rose is going to town, and we are as safe here as we should be in the house alone." And Maud straightened, as she spoke, a dainty white sunbonnet small enough for Queen Mab around the baby face, fresh as an apple blossom turned so cunningly up to her own.

Ah, if she could but have seen the dark, the baleful, yet triumphant face peering and lurking among the brilliant scarlet leaves of a sumach, a little distance from the mossy stone where she sat, in fancied security, enjoying vividly the weird delicious influences of the royal autumn afternoon, her last of happiness for many dark and weary weeks.

It was quite dusk when Rose returned from her long walk, her strong arms loaded with paper parcels, and Maud, a little tired with her ramble, sat waiting on the doorstep with Daisy on her lap.

"I 'spect you tired o' waitin' for lazy old Aunt Rosy, aint yer, honey?" the good soul asked, as she handed the child a new picture-book and a paper of sweets.

"We have done very well, but I am glad you have come home before dark, Rose. See, I have tea all ready, and these pine-apples are just elegant sliced in sugar." And Maud set about arranging the juicy dainty in a pretty glass dish.

Endeavoring to recall it all, in after days, that fate-marked twilight, Maud could re-

member standing with her back to the door as she set her dish of pineapple as a centre-piece on the prettily laid tea-table, while Rose went to dispose of her packages. She also remembered going down the cellar stairs for a pitcher of cream, and passing, as she went, the pleased child perched like a canary bird on the broad seat of the wide open west window eating her candy—then coming again into the room to find the child gone—the retreating roll of carriage wheels, a shriek, and a dreadful, dreadful blank!

A brain fever ensued, which even Dr. Paul Fairfax, had he been at hand, could not have averted, and for weeks Maud lay like a broken reed. Strange vagaries beset the poor fevered, distracted intellect, and she begged piteously for her mother, for Paul, and her child. Black Rose watched over her tenderly as a mother might, never weary, never forgetful, with the tears running in streams over her coffee-colored face. But by-and-by, as reason and calmness came, Maud fancied she heard familiar voices, felt the cool lingering touch of loving hands caressing hers, and opened her eyes sometimes, for a moment, to see Paul Fairfax or Belle bending anxiously over her pillow. Then, too weak to think, she would lose her little hold on connected thoughts again, and relapse wearily into lethargic sleep.

The December snow was whitening the ground when she grew strong enough, in her slow convalescence, to sit at the window and watch the falling flakes; and she sat thus one wintry morning, when Paul, whose presence through the last days of her illness had been a blessed reality, stole a hand over hers, and placed a few fragrant hothouse flowers in her poor wasted fingers.

"Tea-roses, heliotrope and a daisy—O Doctor Fairfax!" she cried, as the tiny white blossom fell from her nerveless hand.

"Yes, Maud, a daisy. Listen, child; I think I may venture to tell you now. I brought these flowers from my home this morning expressly for you. I gathered them before daylight from Belle's flower-

stand, but, Maud, I left another daisy there in my sister's keeping, sound asleep indeed in her pretty bed, the sweetest Daisy that ever bloomed—your own."

He told her all about it, afterwards, when she was a little stronger—how a broken limb had interfered with all his plans for outwitting Barrington in obtaining possession of the child, and then Belle had a dangerous attack of pneumonia, and leaving her seemed impossible; then his coming, suddenly and quite unexpectedly, upon Barrington with the little girl in his arms on a railway car, where he succeeded, by disclosing his knowledge of various burglaries in which the man had been a party, in frightening him into giving up his fancied claim upon his daughter; upon which Doctor Fairfax furnished him with funds, which he gladly consented to use as a means by which to leave the country, never to return.

Maud listened calmly, thankfully, with tears dropping from her long curling eyelashes, over her little hands lying like lily leaves against her scarlet wrapper. And before the Christmas chimes were rung she had joined her little Daisy in the elegant city mansion, where Aunt Olive Fairfax, whose special delight was nursing *invalids*, petted her to her heart's content.

Frederick Barrington did his best to go to Europe as he had promised, but a violent and fatal attack of hemorrhage of the lungs sent him to that bourn whence no traveler returns, and Maud was free.

Paul Fairfax, never an impetuous man, bided his time in silence, for *almost* a year. Then one moonlit evening, as Maud stood in the deep bay-window of the dusky parlor, he just went softly up beside her and gathered her hands in his, and whispered:

"Paradise is promised to him who endures to the end. O my love, have I not been patient?"

So, through the shadows, he read in her eyes the answer he craved, as she said:

"Ah, Paul, you told me truly that August night so long ago. The darkness is fled and morning, golden and sunlit, has dawned at last on my life."

THE HOUSEKEEPER'S STORY.

MATTIE WINFIELD TORREY

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THE HOUSEKEEPER'S STORY.

BY MATTIE WINFIELD TORREY.

"As you say, sir, it's a fine old place. There isn't another like it in this part of the country; but if you had seen it in its palmy days, when the young master was expected home, or the young ladies had their usual crowd of gay friends, you would hardly know it for the same place.

"Ah, those were merry days; and many a season of mirth and revelry have these old walls witnessed. I was younger then and liked nothing better than the fun, frolic and feasting that went on day and night. Sometimes as I sit here alone with all so quiet about me, all the old scenes reappear and I seem to hear again the music and laughter that once filled the old halls, and floated through the many winding passages, while the well-remembered faces and forms which were once grouped about these great rooms, return and pass up and down, up

and down, through the dusky twilight. Of course, it is only fancy, and you may think me very visionary for a woman of my age, but I assure you it is a comfort to be able to recall many of the scenes of the past. There are others that are not so pleasant to remember, and these, too, come up occasionally; but in this life we are constantly getting the bitter with the sweet.

"No, it was not a large family, though the house was generally full of one and another—relatives, or guests. There were a good many servants and I was often hard pushed to preserve order among them.

"General Masterson was a strict disciplinarian, and required from every one the most systematic and diligent discharge of duty. That is his portrait yonder. You would guess that he was a hard man, not likely to be swayed by feeling or sentiment,

or anything outside of the very strictest interpretation of right and wrong.

"After his fashion, I suppose he loved his wife and children, but you would never have suspected it.

"That is Mrs. Masterson's portrait on the right. In her youth she was a great beauty. You can see the remains of it, though that picture was not taken until late in life. She was her husband's opposite in almost every respect. Her blue eyes and fair hair contrasted strongly with his dark hair and eyes. She was all sweetness and gentleness, and there wasn't a servant in the house who did not love and revere her as a saint upon earth. She was always doing some act of kindness, and the needy had but to make their wants known in order to find relief. She was the Lady Bountiful of the whole neighborhood. Ah, she was one of the salt of the earth.

"There were three children living; Walter, Matilda and Edith. If you will step this way, sir, you will get a better light on the pictures.

"Walter was a wild boy, and gave his stern father and his gentle mother a world of trouble. After he went to college he was continually getting into difficulties. He gambled away large sums, and fell into wild and dissolute company, going from bad to worse so rapidly we never knew what would be the next development concerning him.

"He used to bring his wild college friends home with him to pass the vacations, and though they never broke out into any of their wild orgies while here, we all breathed more freely when the house was clear of them. Among the classmates of Walter's who came most frequently, was a young man named Dalton, a handsome fellow enough; but I never liked him. The first time I saw him I took a dislike to his face, and I never could get over the feeling that he was a villain at heart. It seemed to me he was a man you couldn't trust. I couldn't account for the feeling, but it was there.

"Matilda and Edith were just as dissimilar as you would expect the children of two such parents to be. Matilda, the eldest, was a girl after her father's own heart; haughty, proud and overbearing, dark eyes and hair that was like midnight.

"Edith was her opposite; a fair blonde, all sweetness, gentleness and tenderness. The servants all worshipped her, and

thought it a pleasure to wait upon her. She never ordered them about and stormed at them as Matilda did. You can see, sir, they were totally unlike. It is strange that own sisters should differ so widely, but so it is, and we can't explain it.

"Well, this Dalton of whom I spoke, was Walter's roommate at college, and they seemed inseparable companions, for whenever Walter came home Dalton came too. He was on the most familiar footing with the family, and before long we began to hear it whispered about among the servants, that he was courting one of our young mistresses, some said one and some said the other.

"For my own part I couldn't have told which he liked best, for he seemed equally devoted to both. When I saw him walking in the park with Matilda, I could have sworn from his lover-like ways that it was she he was courting; but when he bent over Edith, as she sat at the piano of an evening, he appeared just as devoted to her. So between the two, I was at a loss to know which he would choose.

"I was only the housekeeper, sir, and had no call to interfere, but I could not help wishing Miss Edith would not smile upon him quite so sweetly. But, somehow, he bewitched them all. A handsome face and good manners, you know, sir, are passports to general favor.

"I like to linger over those days. They were the last happy ones that ever came to any of the originals of these portraits, so you won't blame me if I detain you yet a few minutes.

"But one night—how well I remember it! word came that Walter had got into very serious difficulty. He had gambled with a fellow-student, had drawn a pistol and had shot the young man dead, and they had arrested him for murder. It was a sad, sad household, and after Mr. Masterson had gone to see what could be done about it, Mrs. Masterson and the girls crept about the house like shadows of their former selves, and hardly spoke above a whisper.

"For you see, sir, they were descended from an old family, and no disgrace had ever sullied the name until now, and it came hard upon them.

"Well, they had a trial, and it came out by degrees, the whole shameful story of debt and disgrace, and Dalton's infamous conduct, for while pretending to be Walter's

best friend, he had led him on into wickedness, and made the downward path as easy and inviting as possible. He had introduced Walter into disreputable company, and had himself performed a mock ceremony of marriage uniting his friend to the most abandoned of women; together they had forged Mr. Masterson's name for large amounts, together they had plunged into every excess. O it was a shameful story!

"But that wasn't the worst of it yet, sir, for when these facts came out on the trial and Dalton was sought for, it was found that he had fled, and that Matilda had gone with him. She left a note saying that she had been privately married to him some time before, and that they were going away, across the ocean; and they probably went, for nothing more was ever heard of them. So at the very time he was making love to Edith, he was married to her sister.

"Poor Edith! she drooped and pined away, and before long it was plain to be seen that her heart was broken, and that she would never again hold up her head, and sure enough she died in my arms, and

I could almost have thanked God that he took her, for she was too good for this world.

"Walter came near being transported, but on account of his youth was sentenced to the penitentiary, where he soon fell into a decline and died. Mr. Masterson sold more than half of the estate to pay off the dreadful gambling debts, and he and Mrs. Masterson took such a dislike to the old house in which everything reminded them so of old times, days when they had their family all around them, and were all happy together, that they went away and never returned. They died on the continent, and the estate fell to a distant relative who seldom cares to reside here. I am left in charge; but I am getting old and cannot expect to live many years, and who is to see after things when I'm gone is more than I can say. It worries me sometimes; but I suppose there will be some one provided.

"I've learned that, after doing our duty, it is best to trust God for the rest.

"Yes, it's a sad story. I hope I haven't tired you, sir."

THE ICE RAFT.

BY ARTHUR L. MESERVE.

"You had better not cross the lake to-night, stranger. Wait until morning, when you can see your way. The ice is getting weak, and there are holes in many places, which makes it dangerous for those not used to the way."

"But I know every inch of this lake, landlord. Many are the times when there was not a house along its shore that I have trapped half the fall and winter in sight of it, and more times than one built my campfire on the ice, and sought for the fish beneath it. Thank ye kindly for the warning, cap'n, but if these chaps don't feel like backing out, we'll go over the lake to-night."

"No danger of that, Ben," said I. "We are in a hurry to get home as soon as possible, and we had rather walk to-night than not. How far do you call it across, landlord?"

"Some fifteen miles, I think, to the nearest point of land; but I wouldn't wonder if you had to go further than that to-night. The river that comes in at the head of the lake is open, and it is very likely it has thawed quite a channel down into the lake. However, you can keep straight across, and if you find that to be the case, you can follow it down until you come to the firm ice. It may make a little extra travel, that is all."

"The moon will be up by that time," I said. "It rises at ten, and the river you say is well over to the other side. That will give us light to get across the channel without danger."

"Moon or no moon, I can cross the lake," broke in Ben. "There is not a spot I should not know with my eyes shut. The current is pretty strong there, but I do not think it has been warm enough yet to thaw open the lake; but if it has, it will only make a matter of a little more travel. We must run the risk, and take the shortest cut across."

"Lead on, Ben, we are ready. Good-by, landlord! when we come this way again we will try and make a longer stop with you."

"Yes, cap'n; that ar whiskey of yours is good, and I am not a man to slight that; and I must say that bear-steak at supper was the nicest I ever eat. Good luck to ye, and you will see me agin next fall, if I've not gone under."

"Take care and not go under the ice, and look out for the wolves," shouted the landlord, as a last caution, as we turned away from his cabin and went down upon the ice, that stretched away before us until it was lost in the blackness of the night.

"Them varmints wont be apt to trouble us to-night, unless there is a big pack hanging round the shore, and the wind should be right for them to scent us. A few of 'em never venture out in an open space like this. The sneaking varmints aint got no courage unless there is a crowd of 'em together."

A word now as to whom we were, and whither bound, and then we go on with our story. There were three of us—Frank Hardy, Ben Grant and myself. Frank and I had been on business some hundred miles from the town in which we resided, and when just on the point of returning by the same route we had come, we fell in with "Old Ben," as he was known among the trappers and traders, with whom we were well acquainted, and who, learning our intention of immediately setting out for home, prevailed upon us to accompany him, "taking a short cut across lots," as he expressed it, by doing which we should save nearly a third of the distance, though we should have to make the entire journey on foot, instead of by stage, as we had intended. We wanted to see the country, and we liked the society of Old Ben—so we provided ourselves with snowshoes, for it was the first of March, and the snow still lay as deep as in

mid-winter, although travelling was not so bad as it would have been then, as the sun had melted the top of the snow a little, forming a crust, through which we did not sink enough to gather the frost as we walked.

We were armed, each of us with a rifle, and while Frank and I had little else to carry, Old Ben had an axe, and a large knapsack, in which he carried a supply of food, which we should stand in need of, as, according to his reckoning, we should strike but one or two settlements on our route; and although we had our rifles to depend upon for food, it was the season of the year when game is scarce, and the trapper thought that it would be as well to take something along in the way of rations.

The first day of our tramp, along about the middle of the afternoon, we reached the little settlement on the shore of the lake, where we stopped and rested ourselves until the sun went down, when, as we were preparing to set out, the conversation ensued that we have already chronicled.

The sun had gone down, and one by one the stars were coming out and taking their places in the great blue vault above us, when we turned our backs upon the landlord and his cabin, and struck out upon the ice that covered the bosom of the lake, flecked here and there with patches of snow, that, meeting a rough spot in the field, had not been swept away by the winds. The surface was so slippery that we found we could make little headway with our snowshoes on, so we took them off and strapped them upon our backs, after we had gone a short distance from the shore. We were now ready for work, and for the next few miles Frank and I had as much as we could do to keep pace with the long strides of Old Ben, as he led the way across the lake.

An hour went by, and Old Ben assured us that we had made good four miles of our journey. All about us was nought but ice and sky, except to the northward, where a long dark line marked the forest, stretching along the shore of the lake. Once or twice we had seen an airhole in the ice, around which the water lay upon the surface for a little distance; but otherwise than this our foothold was as firm as the solid earth. These places were easy enough to be avoided, for we could see them glittering in the starlight quite a distance away.

All at once the trapper, who still kept in

advance, paused, and stood in the attitude of listening. We followed his example, and remained mute and motionless. Then, though as yet not a sound had met our ears, Old Ben brought down his rifle upon the ice, and exclaimed, in a voice that caused us a thrill of fear in spite of ourselves, "Wolves!"

"Where? I hear nothing," I said.

"I don't suppose you do, youngster; but my ears have been trained to catch the slightest sound. You'll hear them in a minute. Hark!"

This time I, too, heard a sound that was not to be mistaken. A low lingering howl came floating on the slight breeze, and then died away. The next moment it was renewed by what seemed from a hundred throats, coming from the dark forest line to our left, while a hundred more, or as many echoes, took it up on the other side.

"There are lots of the varmints out to-night," said Old Ben; and I could not help thinking that there was a spice of uneasiness in his tone. "A wolf is a cowardly critter, and don't dare to do much unless there is a pack together, and then they are very devils. I hope they will give us a wide berth to-night, for, to tell the truth, boys, we should stand rather a poor sight, with them about us, and not a tree to climb into."

"Do you think they will venture on the ice?" I asked.

"Can't tell, youngster. As I said afore, it will all depend upon how many there are of the varmints. At any rate, I think it best we use our legs as fast as possible."

Another howl, that in spite of all my efforts to the contrary, seemed to freeze my blood, sounded around us, and then died away, only to be caught up as it were and repeated over and over again.

"Come on, boys," exclaimed the trapper, as he struck out at a tall pace—that was imitated as near as possible by Frank and myself.

Half an hour passed, and in spite of our efforts, Frank and I could not keep up the pace assumed by the trapper, notwithstanding the howling of the wolves on every hand grew louder and nearer each moment. Ever and anon Old Ben would cast a look backward, and even in the dim starlight we could see that the look of uneasiness we had seen upon his face had increased rather than diminished.

"Can't ye keep up, boys?" he said, pausing a moment for us to regain his side. "I'm sorry for that, for we have got to do some tall walking, or else be torn to pieces by the devils on our trail. Hark! That cry came from the wolves on the ice, and not more than a mile away at that. I guess it would have been best for us to have taken the landlord's advice, and stayed with him to-night. But if the worst comes to the worst, we have got our rifles, and we can give the varmints a good peppering. I only hope the current where the river flows into the lake is not open, for if it is I am afraid the wolves will cut us off."

Ben's words had the effect to rouse us to greater exertions, and for a time we kept even with him; but, in spite of our utmost exertions, the howling of the wolvesounded nearer, and we knew that they were on our track and gaining slowly upon us. Many a hasty glance we cast behind us, but in the dim twilight nothing was to be seen of our pursuers. A few minutes more, and the east lighted up, and ere long the moon rose in unclouded splendor, throwing a flood of light over the lake. One glance backward now, and our enemies were revealed in close pursuit. A long line of dark moving objects was behind us, and to our horror, stretching out on either hand in the shape of a crescent, as if the great army of blood-thirsty beasts meant to encircle us. Away in advance, miles before us, rose the dim outlines of the forest that clothed the shore, and there was our only hope of escape—a forlorn hope indeed.

Ours was now a race for life; an almost hopeless one it seemed to us, in spite of the encouraging words of Old Ben, uttered, we knew, to give us new strength and courage. Every muscle was strained to the utmost, and we flew over the ice, our ears filled with the howlings of the hungry horde behind us. A cloud floated over the face of the moon, and its shadow was thrown over us for a few moments, and the gaze we cast behind showed only a dark moving outline of dusky figures on the ice, that every moment lessened the distance between us; yet we hoped for life, and looked forward with eager gaze towards the dark outline of the forest, still miles before us. The cloud floated past, and again a cloud of moonlight enveloped us. With a cry of dismay Old Ben paused in his headlong course, and by an effort, we did the same, close beside him.

"What is it?" I asked.

"Look yonder!"

I followed the motion of his hand, and my heart sank within me, and I no longer wondered at the exclamation that fell from his lips. *Before us, perhaps an eighth of a mile away, lay a long stretch of open water!*

"The current from the river," said Old Ben. "The landlord was right, and I fear it is no use to try further. We cannot go round, for they would be upon us before we got half the distance. But come on, boys; if worst comes to worst, the cold water of the lake is better than being torn to pieces alive."

Old Ben sprang forward, and we followed closely. The delay we had made had lessened the distance between us and our enemies one-half. Another such a pause, and we should be battling for our lives.

A few moments, and we stood just on the edge of the open water. The wolves were close upon us, and their howlings filled our ears. It seemed as though the din came from a thousand throats, and was joined into one fiendish howl.

"We can swim for it, boys, but I fear we shall stand little chance when the water touches our limbs; but the cramp is not to be feared so much as death by these fierce devils."

"Can we do nothing with our rifles?" asked Frank. "Mine is good for a half dozen before I succumb to them or to the waters of the lake."

"And what is that to the yelling pack behind us?" said the trapper. "But quick—follow me; I have a plan that may save us yet."

A sharp point of ice made out into the current for perhaps twenty feet. Upon this we sprang, and then Old Ben exclaimed:

"Keep me covered with your rifles, boys, and I will save you yet. Shoot a wolf or two, and that will delay them a little."

We did as he told us. A simultaneous discharge, and two of our pursuers fell. In a moment their comrades were upon them, and they were torn into a hundred pieces while yet alive. Old Ben was laboring like an ox. Thick and fast he was tracing the blows, along where the ice we were on joined to the main field, and soon a lucky blow parted it. Again we discharged our rifles, and then pushed with all our might against the solid ice. Slowly our ice raft moved out into the stream, and to our great

joy we saw a dark line of water between us and our enemies. We gave a shout of triumph, that caused the howling mass scarce a dozen feet away to recede for a moment.

"Don't crow, youngsters. You aint out of the woods yet," said old Ben; and his words were true, for hardly had the shout died away before a half dozen hungry wolves sprung high in the air, and three of them alighted among us, while the others, less fortunate, were floundering in the water.

"Shoot those on the bank, boys; I'll care for these," shouted old Ben, as with his axe uplifted, he dealt his blows right and left; and in less time than it has taken to chronicle it, our raft was free from enemies, and floating gallantly out into the open water, that, instead of our destruction, had proved our salvation.

"You may shout now, boys, for we are

safe," exclaimed Old Ben, setting the example himself; and we sent up such a shout as that lake never heard before, and caused the wolves to again rush back in dismay. Those that had fallen into the water regained the ice, only to be torn to pieces by their companions, and by way of a parting salute, Frank and I sent volley after volley among them.

By the means of our snowshoes, we paddled our raft out to the centre of the open space, and there remained through the night, which, fortunately for us, was not very cold, listening to the disappointed howlings of our enemies, and in the early morning light had the satisfaction of seeing them slink away until they were lost in the dark outlines of the forest; and then we bade adieu to our ice raft, thankful for our escape, which seemed to us almost like a miracle.